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Golfer

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Today's Golfer Contents

April 2015



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Contents April 2015

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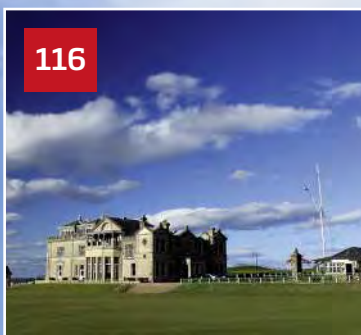
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Subscribe
And get a dozen
Bridgestone balls!
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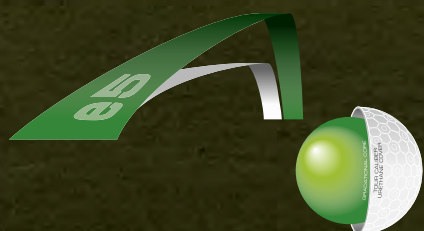


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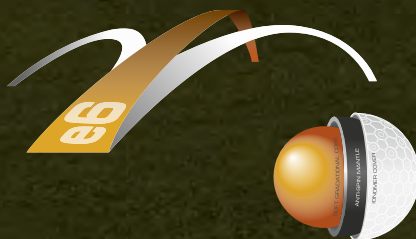
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E5 FOR A HIGHER FLIGHT**



HIGH FLIGHT



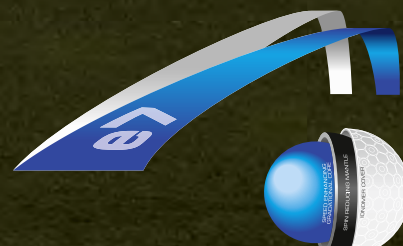
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THE E6 FOR A STRAIGHTER FLIGHT**



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From the editor

Golf's loss, not the BBC's

The Open's move could hurt the game

As a teenager growing up with vague interest in the game, I can still recall the spark that persuaded me to take the plunge and start playing properly.

It was a Sunday afternoon in July 1993, and I turned on the TV to see Greg Norman and Nick Faldo battling for the Claret Jug around Royal St George's.

The course looked absolutely stunning. The fairways were hard, the greens harder, the wind was gusting and the two players were at the very top of their games. I wanted to do *that*. So the following weekend, I borrowed a set of clubs from a friend and was teeing it up (in trainers) at the local municipal. Not quite the Kent links, but good enough for my first 18 holes.

I can't remember much about that round, other than a 7-iron that cut into a right-hand pin and landed 10 feet away. I missed the putt, of course, but that was it. I was hooked.

Would I be here today as the editor of Britain's best-selling golf magazine had I not stumbled across golf on the BBC that afternoon? Probably not. And that's why the news that the Open is going to Sky in 2017 worries me. Defending Open champion Rory McIlroy summed things up, saying: "Money talks, you know. It's a shame The Open is not going to be on terrestrial television. Sky is expensive and a lot of people can't afford it. It would have been nice if they could have come to some sort of resolution."

Lee Westwood added: "The BBC are doing golf no favours at all by letting The Open go, and you have to question the role of the R&A as well. They are the guardians of the game, but it seems to be money-driven."

The BBC losing The Open will do nothing to help golf's participation levels in the UK. We can only hope the R&A ploughs much of its reported £10 million a year from Sky back into the grass roots game in this country.

Chris Jones, Editor,
Today's Golfer @thetodaysgolfer



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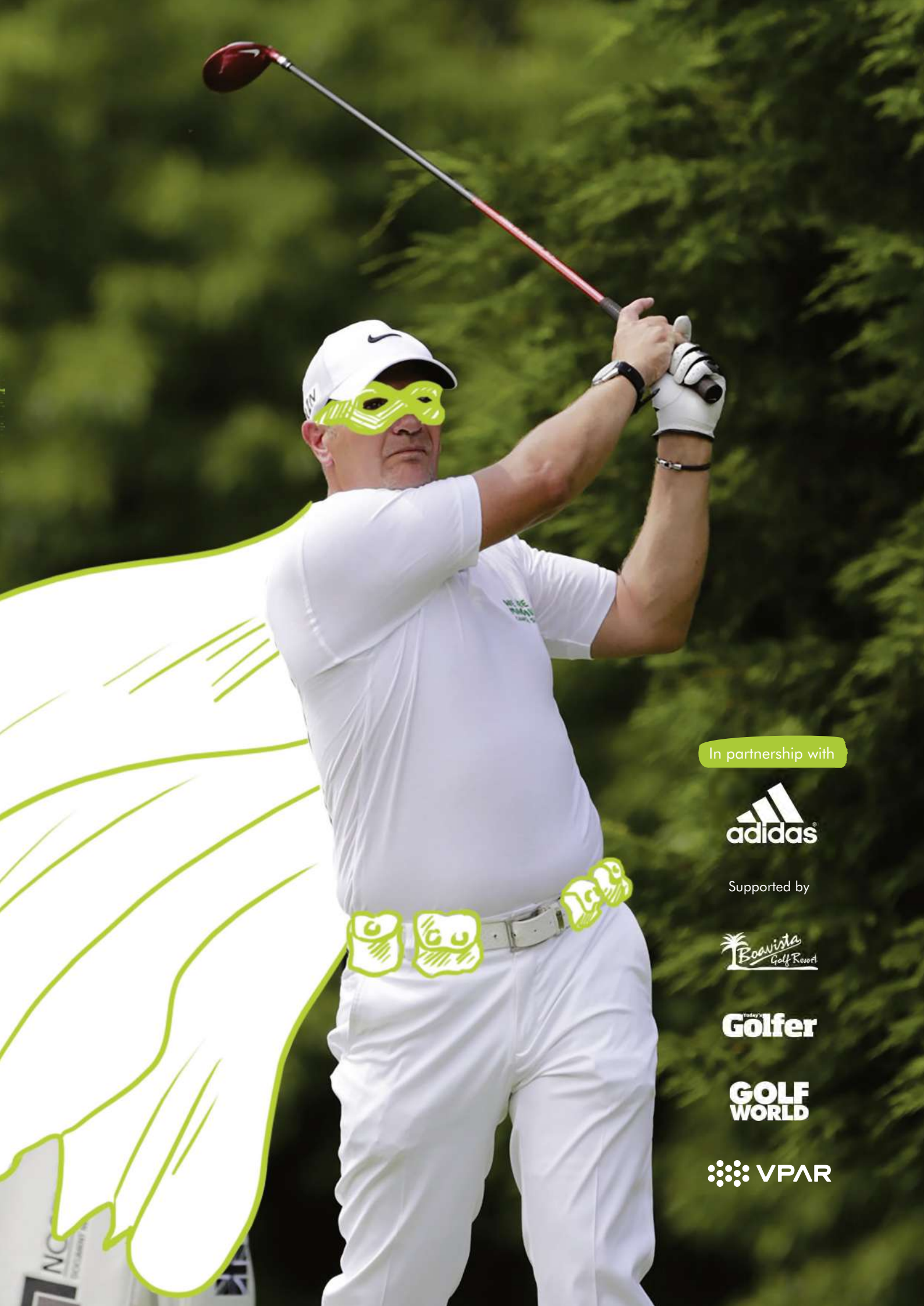
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First Tee

The most important things in golf this month | Edited by Rob McGarr



El Cardonal is a private members' course, so you can't just rock up on a Saturday morning, hand over £20 and head to the first tee. Your only way in is to rent a property on the Diamante estate, and then stump up the £275 fee.

Tiger talks course design

Exclusive! Woods tells us about the first track he's plotted, in Mexico

Tiger Woods hasn't had much luck as a golf course designer. Projects in Dubai, North Carolina and Mexico all saw him do extensive work without ever opening a course due to circumstances beyond his control. It was with some relief, then, that he cut the ribbon on his first design to reach completion, El Cardonal, in Mexico. We sat down with him to discuss his favourite courses around the world and the ideas behind his first creation.



Q What are the key ingredients of a great golf course?

I believe great golf courses are the result of variety, strategy, a distinctive environment and the ability to make golfers think and make choices.

Q What challenges do you like to present?

I try to create lots of shot options that challenge players to think and make decisions during their rounds. I want my courses to be playable for every golfer, regardless of ability. I have played enough pro-ams over the years to know that not every golfer is a scratch handicap. I don't want people to lose a dozen balls when they play our course.

Q Which courses inspired your design?

Pinehurst is a great example of a course that's tough for us, but playable for everybody. It gets players thinking, with options around the greens. I love St Andrews because there are so many different ways to play it, to get the ball onto

the green. The game today is very much played in the air. I hope to bring back the use of the ground in my designs. I try to leave the fronts of greens open giving players the option to bounce their approach shots into greens and using the contours to get the ball close to the flag.

Q Does it feature any signature holes?

My goal on every course I design is to have 18 signature holes.

Q What do you hope people that play the course will make of it?

I want the golf courses I design to be distinct and memorable. The biggest compliment that a designer can receive is if a golfer can't wait to play his golf course again.

■ To find out more and arrange a trip, visit diamantecabosanlucas.com



When is a 6-iron not a

With lofts getting stronger, you'll hit a new club further than ever – but

What does the number on the bottom of each iron tell you? It seems like an easy question, doesn't it? It tells you how lofted that particular club is, which gives you an idea of how far you hit it, enabling you to choose the right one for each shot. Except, it doesn't. There is no industry standard, so the "7" on one 7-iron may mean something very different to the "7" on another. The numbers help you sequence your irons, but beyond that, they are almost meaningless.

How much do lofts vary from manufacturer to manufacturer?

A lot. Ping's S55 7-iron has a loft of 33 degrees. TaylorMade's RSi1 7-iron has 30.5 degrees. Callaway's Big Bertha 7-iron has 30 degrees, which is one degree less than the 6-iron in other sets.

It's not just differences from manufacturer to manufacturer. Even within manufacturers, the lofts from set to set will vary considerably. The Nike VRS Covert 2.0 7-iron, for instance, has 31 degrees of loft, four degrees less than the 7-iron in the V Forged Pro Combo set.

Why are lofts so different from one set to another?

If your clubhead is specifically designed to help launch the ball higher (with weight low in the head), you need stronger lofts to create the optimum ball flight, or you'll find your ball ballooning into the air. Generally speaking, irons tailored to better players will have weaker lofts, as these players seek distance control and feel over increased distance.

To make things even more confusing, lofts seem to be evolving and getting stronger over time.

Why have lofts changed?

"Three things determine the distance you

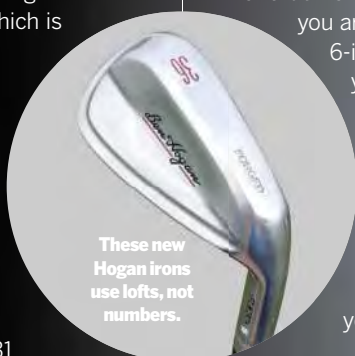
hit a golf ball: the loft of the clubhead, the length of the shaft, and the speed at which you swing," says expert club maker Tom Wishon. "Over the last few years your swing speed has probably stayed about the same, but the loft angles and shaft length of your clubs have not.

"Each year, in order to say their clubs hit further, the club companies have been tinkering with the loft angles – lowering them a bit at a time each year. As a result, every club in the set has moved 'up' at least one, if not two numbers. So, when you go to a driving range for a demo day and find you are hitting a new 6-iron further than you hit your current 5-iron, you now know why. It's because the shiny new 6-iron in your hands was a 5-iron only a few years ago, and probably a 4-iron a few years before that."

Isn't more distance a good thing?

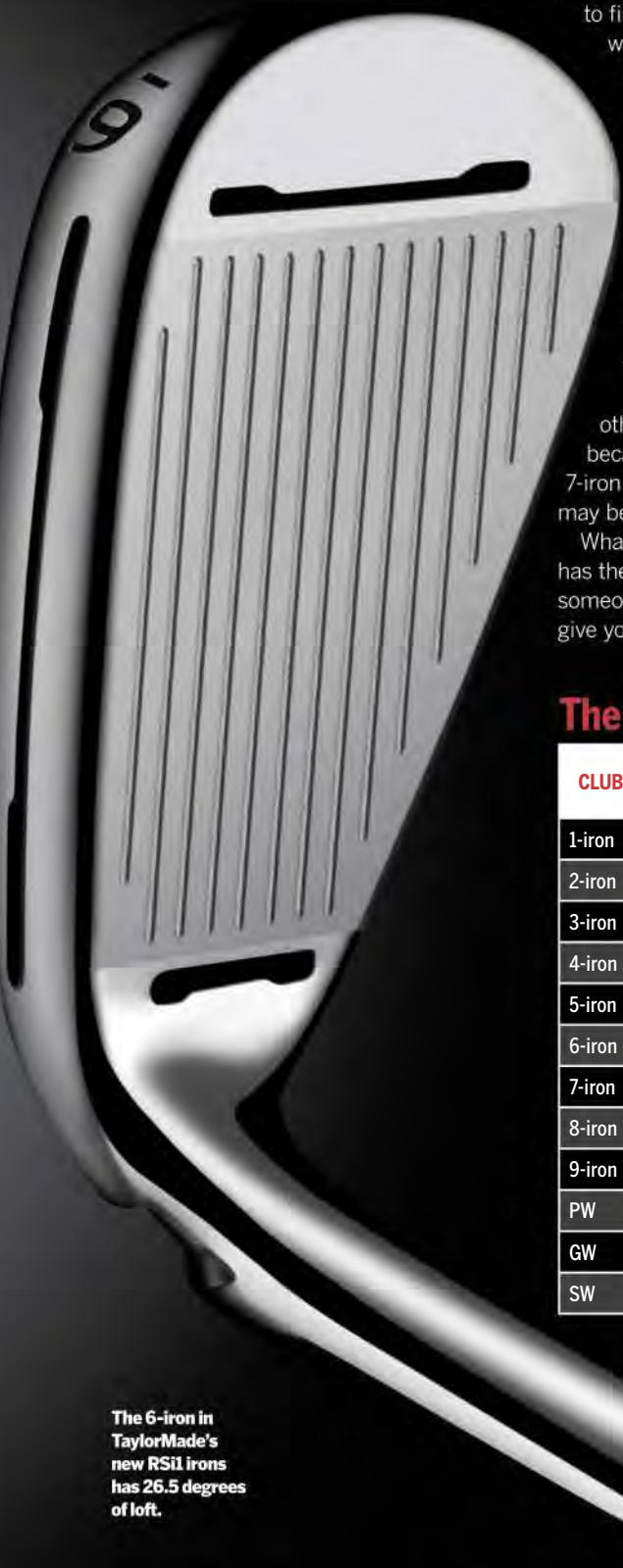
Looking at that question in isolation, the answer may well be yes. Being able to hit your 7-iron 160 yards instead of 150 yards sounds like it will help your game. The problems come with your long and short irons. As lofts have gotten stronger, a 3-iron that may have once offered 21 degrees of loft now has just 17 degrees. An iron with only 17 degrees loft is very hard for most amateurs to hit, which is

'THE SHINY NEW 6-IRON IN YOUR HANDS WAS A 5-IRON ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO AND A 4-IRON BEFORE THAT'



6-iron?

is that a good thing?



The 6-iron in TaylorMade's new RS11 irons has 26.5 degrees of loft.

why fewer and fewer of us carry 3-irons, instead favouring easier-to-hit hybrids.

At the other end of your set, it might be nice for your ego to hit your pitching wedge 150 and your sand wedge 130, but what are you going to hit if you've got 100 yards to the flag? Distance gaps have increased, which means you either need to fill the gaps by carrying more wedges, or become more creative by hitting less than full shots.

What should I do about it?

The main thing you need to do is pay attention to how far you hit each club, rather than what number is written on it. Keep a track of the average distance you get with each club, and either remember them, or even write them on the bottom of each club.

And don't compare distances with other golfers. Don't hit a 7-iron just because your partner just popped his 7-iron on the green; the club he used may be equivalent to your 5-iron!

What would you rather hit: a club that has the same number printed on it as someone else, or the club that's going to give you a birdie putt?

The evolution of lofts

CLUB	1960s-1970s	1980s	1990s-2000s	2010+
1-iron	17	17	16	NA
2-iron	20	20	18	NA
3-iron	24	23	21	18-21
4-iron	28	26	24	22-24
5-iron	32	30	27	24-27
6-iron	36	34	31	27-31
7-iron	40	38	35	31-35
8-iron	44	42	39	35-40
9-iron	48	46	43	40-44
PW	52	50	48	44-48
GW	N/A	N/A	52	48-52
SW	56	56	56	54-56

This month's ups and downs

Everything that's hot – and not – from the world of golf

WEBB SIMPSON

Shot an opening 62 in the Sony Open, his first time using a short putter, before breaking his belly putter over his knee to stop any temptation to go back.



LEE WESTWOOD

"If there is a power looking over us, I hope he takes note and delivers three Majors to this kind and gentle human being," said Colin Davies, after a holidaying Westwood saved him from drowning in the Atlantic.

BROOKS KOEPKA

The 24-year-old eagled the 15th at the Waste Management Open on his way to a maiden PGA Tour title, benefiting from Martin Laird's bogey, double-bogey finish.



PADRAIG HARRINGTON

A yard from the water on the last at TPC Scottsdale, Harrington's left-handed air shot resulted in a quadruple-bogey and a missed cut.

TIGER WOODS

Shot a career worst 82 at the Waste Management Open to miss the cut in last place and drop out of the world top-50 for the first time in three years.



ROBERT ALLENBY

Missed the cut at the Sony Open and later appeared with scars and bruises, claiming he had been kidnapped outside a Honolulu bar, robbed and beaten. Sources questioned Allenby's story, and a police investigation is ongoing.

Coming to a shop near you

We hadn't seen any of this until last month's PGA Show



1 ULTRA-COMFY STAND BAG

If you've ever carried a big rucksack with a waist strap, you'll know how much more support there is. Now Sun Mountain has applied the same idea to a golf bag. A removable belt on the Three 5 Zero Gravity bag takes the majority of the bag's weight off the shoulders. It fits waist sizes from 30" to 40". **£199.**



2 AFFORDABLE LAUNCH MONITOR

SkyGolf has a new launch monitor for people who don't want to spend a fortune, but still want stats. Easily portable at just 7.5in tall, the SkyTrak records all the key numbers – ball speed, launch angle, back spin, side spin... It pairs wirelessly with an iPad and is expected to come to the UK this spring. It's \$2,000 in the US.

World's biggest golf show in numbers...

41,000

Visitors from 79 countries attended the Florida event.

7,600

PGA professionals attended from all over the world.

1 million

Square feet of interactive exhibit and demonstration space in the Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando.

1,000

Exhibitors there, including more than 200 new ones for 2015.

10

Miles of aisles between stands in the Convention Centre.

200

Hitting bays at the 42-acre Orange County National range during the annual, giant Demo Day.

\$81 million

Estimated economic impact to Orlando as a result of the show.

3 PGA TOUR PLAYERS' BEER

Graeme McDowell, Keegan Bradley and Freddie Jacobsen have launched their own brew. Freddie's Scandinavian blonde ale, G-Mac's Celtic style pale ale, and Keegan's New England lager are partners in the new GolfBeer Brewing Co. The beer is brewed in Florida and is being sold in golf clubs and restaurants across the US.



4 IRONS WITH LOFTS, NOT NUMBERS

The Ben Hogan brand is back. But its new irons aren't called 4-PW. The numbers are replaced by lofts, and buyers can choose the loft that suits their game. The company will keep 44 separate lofts in 1-degree increments in stock, stretching from 20 to 63 degrees.



5 THE IDIOT-PROOF TROLLEY

Some push trolleys require a degree in engineering to open and close them. But Sun Mountain says it has solved the problem with its Reflex push cart, which folds up almost instantly in three simple steps to a size that's barely more than two cubic feet yet features the widest wheel base of any Sun Mountain push cart.

'The end of an era'

Stars aren't happy as the BBC loses its live Open coverage to Sky

PETER ALLISS

It's sad. It's the end of an era. The R&A do lots of lovely things, but they have dipped their hands into the money. But, hand on heart, I can't not criticise the BBC. Why haven't they said: 'We're struggling against the financial might of Sky but why don't we also cover some of the other events?' Going back, there were people who fought harder to keep tournaments on the BBC.

LEE WESTWOOD

It's very disappointing. Look at the viewing figures for Sky compared to the BBC and you have to question it when the number of golfers is dwindling. I wouldn't have got into golf if it wasn't for watching The Open. The BBC is doing golf no favours at all by letting it go. It seems to be all money-driven, and Sky is willing to pay most.

GRAEME McDOWELL

We are all very aware of the falling numbers and where the game needs to go in terms of attracting women and children. Golf's inclusion in the Olympics should hopefully help that, bringing the sport to so many television homes. I do sympathise with the British viewer. I feel bad for anyone sitting at home with their TV licence.

JUSTIN ROSE

I remember as a kid being so excited every July when hearing the theme tune at the start of the BBC's Open coverage. I'd be glued to the coverage all day, and without any ad breaks. Then when it finished we would rush down the golf club and try and squeeze in as many holes as we could before it got dark. Having golf on free channels is important to the growth of the game.

R&A RESPONSE

We believe this is the best result for the Open and for golf. It will enable us to increase substantially our support for golf in the UK and Ireland, with significantly increased financial support to participation initiatives. Both the BBC and Sky are committed to supporting the R&A's efforts to promote participation in the sport through their Get Inspired and Sky Academy.

Read BBC golf commentator Andrew Cotter's views on page 27.

'HAVING GOLF ON FREE CHANNELS IS IMPORTANT TO THE GROWTH OF THE GAME'

JUSTIN ROSE

A dream course we can all play

We chose the best layout on *The Golf Club* computer game from hundreds of entries

The Golf Club, available on PC, PS4, and Xbox One, allows you to create photo-realistic courses of your dreams. In our November issue (327) we asked you to show off your design skills and from hundreds of fantastic entries, Mark Davies' Three Cliffs Bay stood out for its spectacular scenery and all-or-nothing cliffside drama. A greenkeeper at Celtic Manor for 10 years, Mark is particularly proud of his 8th and 16th holes. He wins a fourball at The London Club in Kent for his winning course.



Mark's design features plenty of dramatic holes.



Lots of hazards and superb views at Three Cliffs Bay.

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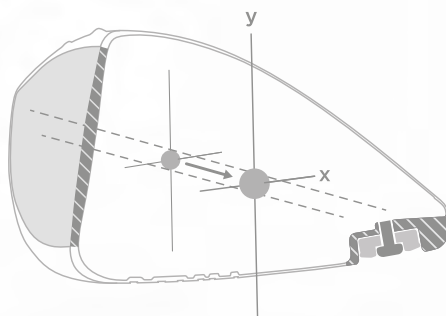


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'I decorated my house with towels from top US courses'

David Wuthrich took his search for souvenirs one step further

I did not set out to play America's top 100 courses. In the summer of 1987, my brother and I travelled around the country and decided to play golf along the way as we are both mad about the game. It all started on June 6, 1987 with Harbour Town Links in South Carolina. It was a stunning layout and well worth its place among the top 100. These trips soon became annual and after a couple more we had played six of the top 100, so decided it would be fun to try and play as many as we could.

I wanted a memento from each course and started with a towel, ball and bag tag, along with pictures I took of each hole that I put into a photo album with the scorecard and yardage book. Since then, it has evolved into a range of items including pencils, ball markers, divot tools, combs, water bottles and autographed photos of great players like Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus. They are my prized possessions.

My collection includes items from all the top 100 courses in the US that I've played plus a few from trips to Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. I probably have over 250 golf towels and balls as I also buy items from courses I think will make the list in the future. As for pencils, ball markers, cards and everything else,

there are too many to count, but it is easily in the thousands. All the items are displayed at home in a reception room and the guest bedroom where the walls are completely covered with all the towels, much like wallpaper. My family and friends think I am crazy! My wife is the best in the world for allowing me to display all of these items in her house. She limits me to two rooms, but I do have an Augusta painting in the dining room and Pebble Beach in the bedroom.

Since 1985 there have been 238 courses on the top 100 list and I have played them all. I travel with my brother and my friends and we try to take at least one big trip a year, lasting around nine days, including 18 rounds of golf and up to 1,500 miles of travelling.

I've enjoyed all of the courses and struggle to pick a favourite. Of the US Open courses it would have to be Shinnecock Hills. It's very challenging but fair and plays differently depending on the wind. If I could be a member at one for the rest of my life it would be Merion. If I had one last round to play it would be at Cypress Point. But the best overall experience was Augusta. Being among all that history on the course and in the clubhouse was incredible.

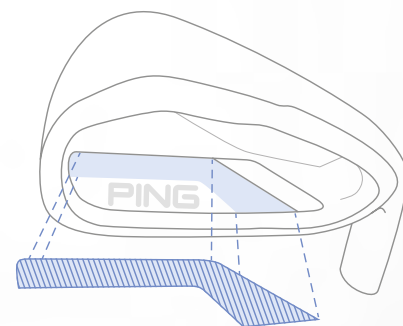
His favourite venues



Major venues Augusta (1), Shinnecock (2), Oakmont (3) and Merion (6), along with the old school clubs at National Golf Links of America (4) and Cypress Point (5).

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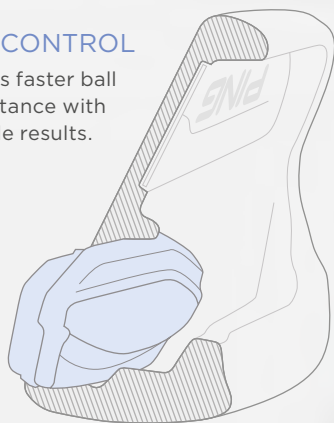


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Jbe Kruger

Gregory Havret

Tom Lewis

Daniel Brooks





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Jimmy Walker

Webb Simpson

Victor Dubuisson

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YOUR SAY

How to get golf fit... and how not to get club-fitted



Do single-sex clubs belong on the Open rota?

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Get open... or no Open

There can be little doubt that with ever decreasing membership and lack of interest from the youth of the country in recent years, the game has deteriorated. Many reasons have been formulated, but possibly the most persuasive could be the male chauvinist attitudes which have prevailed for ages, but eased somewhat last year when the R&A decided to admit lady members.

Many private clubs have failed to respond to the leadership at St Andrews, the most notable being based in Troon, Muirfield and

Sandwich. Perhaps the ultimate sanction of removal from the rota of The Open Championship will be necessary to bring them into line. Clubs must open full membership status to men and women and in so doing get rid of the old fogies and cobwebs which have smothered clubhouses for too long.

PETER HUGHES, BURNHAM, BUCKS

Ed's reply: Next year's Open venue Troon is reviewing its membership policy.

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A PUTTER FROM PING'S KARSTEN TR RANGE, WORTH £129-£153



TO THE POINT

The BBC losing The Open to Sky from 2017

Hoped the BBC kept it so the masses can see it. Golf needs all the exposure it can get!

Ben Chappell

BBC Open coverage is live from 8am-8pm, non-stop. Sky will have four hours a day, broken by endless commercial breaks.

Cliff Briant

Is it any wonder golf doesn't get the mainstream recognition when it sells out to the highest bidder?

Craig Lourie

For the general health of golf, this is devastating. The casual viewer would be gone forever and all sports need casual viewers.

Duncan Spite

Ken on the course has my loyalty.

David Simmons

Will be really sad to see the Open leave terrestrial TV.

Phil Redhead

It's awful on Sky. It's just endless clips of Tiger, only interrupted by boring pundits talking about how good Tiger was 10 years ago.

Robert David Layte



Darren Clarke: fit for purpose.

Pump iron, thump your irons

Now that both Rory McIlroy and Darren Clarke regularly post gym selfies, it seems that no modern sport is immune to the lure of weightlifting as a way to improve performance. Even as a high handicapper, I have spent time down the gym in the off-season. I've found my game has improved in several ways. My overall fitness over 18 holes has improved dramatically. Last summer there were a few rounds where I really felt the strain after it was all over – a combination of my sedentary 9-5 and overall lack of fitness.

Another side effect of the regular weight busting sessions down the gym is that, in order to keep it up, I've had to eat better. Like Darren, I have favoured a high protein diet. I feel lighter, have far more energy round the course and rely less on pounding down the chocolate bars and energy drinks halfway round.

The last benefit has been my control of the club has improved. A lot of free weight techniques strengthen your core muscles, which are essential to stability during the swing. More stability has generated more clubhead speed, which as we all know, equals more distance. All without remortgaging my house for the latest hot driver!

Although very few of us get to play this wonderful game of ours professionally, the trends in the pro game inevitably work back into the amateur arena. Why should working out at the gym be any different? Some of us might end up playing golf a little longer because of it too!

ANDREW MCMICHAEL, EMAIL

Senior Masters

The new season is upon us, and with the Masters around the corner I am intrigued to see if Rory can get himself into contention and hopefully end up wearing the famous Green Jacket to complete his set.

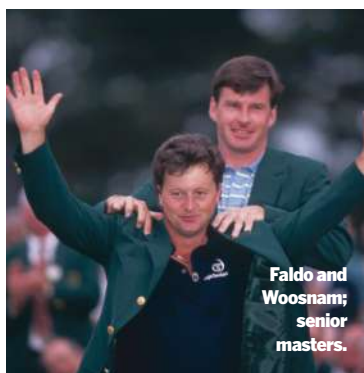
This got me thinking, and I remembered reading a piece in TG regarding the possible introduction of a senior Ryder Cup. Apparently the idea has been discussed and a feasibility evaluation of the idea is currently being carried out. Players are being consulted and the respective tours are submitting detailed proposals.

Why isn't there a senior Masters? It would be great to see, and the spectacle would definitely pull in a wide audience. The senior Major roster would be complete and I think the golfing public would relish it. Obviously many discussions will need to take place and many meetings convened, but why not?

The Augusta National Tournament Committee will obviously make the final decision, but I wonder if the question has ever been asked before.

I would love it; seeing all the past masters walking the beautifully manicured fairways again would just be a sight to see. To have a Senior Ryder Cup staged on opposite years to the main event, and a Senior Masters in September, just after the US PGA, would be a real treat for golf fans.

SIMON AMOS, EMAIL



Faldo and Woosnam; senior masters.

Club pros, no cons

I read the letter by Steve Grigg in the February issue of TG regarding the online purchase of fake golf equipment by people who are either new to the game or looking for a bargain. I, like many, have been caught out in the past. There is nothing worse than finding out that your prized new club is a fake of inferior quality.

Nowadays, I avoid the risk of these disappointments by always using my local PGA professional. The club professionals have all the latest equipment offered by several manufacturers in their shops, or can get them within a day or two by making a quick call to the manufacturers direct.

They have the latest club-fitting technology and in most cases years of experience. There is no chance of being lumbered with a fake and you can still get a good price. I have recently proved this when purchasing a Ping G30 driver, fairway wood and two hybrids. I saved over £100 by using my local professional. He gave me demo clubs for a few days with various shafts to see what best suited my game and all the best advice a golf professional has to offer. This sound advice cannot be offered when you buy online or in a large retail store.

If you are happy to buy secondhand gear, your PGA pro can also help there. They will know of members in their club who are selling off their previous equipment as they have recently upgraded, and will have used items on offer in the shop at a great price. They can re-grip and re-shaft on the spot, to make those clubs almost like new. What more can you ask for?

Like most golfers, I suffer what I call 'magpie syndrome' – if it shines, I want it. My local professional has talked me out of wasting lots of money over the years as he is aware of the syndrome. He knows my game and what will and will not benefit it. His mission statement is "look after

TOP TWEETS



FROM THEM...

Paula Creamer
@ThePCreamer

Well hello there massive alligator... Golfer problems



Luke Donald @LukeDonald

"Social media" such a silly phrase. When you are on it, you are infinitely less social!

Richie Ramsay @RamsayGolf

If @andy_murray listened to all the haters sure he wouldn't be where he is today. Winning ain't easy #belief #hardwork #positive

Pablo Larrazabal @plarrazabal

What a week for the world of golf... Congrats to @BKoeppka for his first win on the @PGATOUR... He will be the one to watch this year...

Stewart Cink @stewartcink

Katy Perry winning over fans big time. She has unique appeal to pretty much every type of fan.

Ted Scott @jtedscott

Last night @GolfChannel said "since 2010, nobody's won more than Bill Haas (6 wins) except Rory n Tiger." But @bubbawatson has 7. #biased?

Stuart Appleby @StuartAppleby

For you rock geeks. On a sheep farm in Western Australia they found a crystal called "Zircon" that is dated at about 4.4 billion years old.

Trevor Immelman @TrevorImmelman

Just finished at the dentist. Makes no sense to me why dentist chairs are more comfortable than airplane seats....

FROM YOU...

David @eveld72

To say it was cold this morning would be the understatement of the year. Wind chill -9.



Steve Worley @FakeSteveWorley

BBC don't have the infinite sums of funding that Sky do. They put all their eggs in the Formula 1 basket I'm afraid.

Paul Davies @Tigerpuds7

Nice to see them struggling in the rain, in Phoenix at the #WasteManagementOpen #welcometourworld

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Tiger has been all over the course since his comeback.

my members and they will look after me". How many golfers have equipment gathering dust that they bought because it shined and have never been able to use it properly?

KARL OFFERS, WEST MONMOUTHSHIRE GC, SOUTH WALES

Fitted? Or fitted up?

I have read over the years your recommendations of being fitted properly by a professional for the correct fitting club. Well over the last 20 or so years I am becoming more and more convinced we may be getting more fitted up than fitted.

My current irons, purchased about five years ago, are TaylorMade R9 with KBS stiff shafts. But I am now thinking there is more advanced technology on the market and am considering buying a new set.

A visit to a golf store in Nottingham revealed the best clubs for me would be Wilson Staff. Three weeks later a visit to their sister store in Derby revealed it was Mizuno – my "DNA" said so. My club pro thinks I should be using Titleist. None of the clubs I tried felt or looked any better than my current R9s.

At the practice ground recently I tried my friend's dated Ping Rapture irons with graphite shafts. The results were amazing. The balls flew like

rockets, the flight was fantastic, the dispersion could have been covered by a duvet. So I'm asking, why oh why can't my pro or experts find such a club for me? Can't someone just look at my swing and give me genuine impartial advice and the club that really suits ME? Am I alone in this or have other golfers gone through the same experience?

ANDY NORTON (6 HCP), DERBYSHIRE

Trials of the Tiger

I've found it quite upsetting watching Tiger Woods' trials in his first two events back since surgery. Here is an icon of the game, a man who's done more to grow golf than just about anyone in history, criticised and condemned by every armchair pundit in the world.

He wouldn't have expected to finish dead last in two consecutive events, but give the guy a break. When he missed the cut at the Phoenix Open, people were queueing up to say he had the chipping yips, he was in denial, he'd never win again... Come on! This is Tiger Woods!

I'm sure he'll work through his swing issues – like he has before – and win again. Will he win five more majors to beat Jack? I don't know about that. But he'll win again.

DAVE HOOD, EMAIL

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EDITORIAL

Editor Chris Jones	01733 468523
Features Editor Rob McGarr	01733 468096
Courses Editor Kevin Brown	01733 468299
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Staff Writer Joseph Downes	01733 468695
Head of Publishing Richard Browne	01733 468240
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Art Editor Mal Bailey	01733 468244
Art Editor Paul Ridley	01733 468466
Web Producer Sarah Pyett	01733 468646
Editorial Assistant Linda Manigan	01733 468243

CONTRIBUTORS

Justin Rose, Howard Boylan, Robbie Greenfield, Kevan Whitson, Gary Nicol, Jon Walleit, Adrian Bishop, Gareth Johnston, Adrian Fryer, Andrew Cotter, Denis Pugh, Tom Critchell, Angus Murray, James Ridyard, Joel Cunningham, Robin Hopkins, Stuart Hood, Duncan Lennard, Bob Atkins, Dougray Scott, James Cheadle, Graeme Storm, Chris Bertram, Darren Parris, Isobel Cardew, Jacques Portal. All pictures Getty Images unless stated.

ADVERTISING

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Commercial Manager Ian McCartney	01733 468167
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Telesales Executive Anton Wells	01733 468677
Brand Director George Mardle	020 7208 3557
Sales Executive Lucy Sango	020 7295 6713
Digital Commercial Director (Sport) Jim Burton	01733 468893
Inserts contact Howard Foster	0161 877 7455

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01733 468859, todaysgolferoffers.co.uk, enquiries@todaysgolferoffers.co.uk

MARKETING

Marketing Executive Laura Holdup	01733 468122
Direct Marketing Manager Susan Rogers	01733 468565
Head of Newstrade Marketing Leon Benoiton	leon.benoiton@flgroup.co.uk
Newstrade Marketing Manager Jon Freeman	jon.freeman@flgroup.co.uk

PRODUCTION

Advertising Production Nick Greenwood	01733 468075
Printer Wyndeham Heron, The Bentall Complex, Colchester Rd, Heybridge, CM9 4NW	
Publisher Bauer Consumer Media Ltd	
Distributor Frontline	01733 555161

BAUER CONSUMER MEDIA

Editorial Director June Smith-Sheppard Head of Digital Charlie Calton-Watson Group Direct Marketing Director Chris Gadsby Finance Director Lisa Hayden Group Finance Director Sarah Vickery MD Sport Patrick Horton Group Managing Director Rob Munro-Hall CEO Paul Keenan

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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ANDREW COTTER

Something I said?

By now you probably know The Open is moving from the BBC to Sky. But what affect will this have on golf?

La roue tourne' is how the French express it. 'The wheel turns', to describe how things change and move on. Nothing stays the same forever. Unfortunately, in an oral exam at university, my pronunciation was so poor that I confidently told my French professor that 'the street turns' and he just looked at me and shook his head rather sadly.

Anyway, this is obviously a difficult column to write this month. Mostly because since the big news regarding The Open Championship I now live in a cardboard box under a motorway, shouting at passing cars and eating mice.

It just feels rather strange that, in the not too distant future, The Open will not be live on BBC Television. I, you, all of us, will have grown up watching the game's oldest and greatest championship on The BBC, unless you are of such a vintage that you are still concerned about Pathé News losing the rights.

Which does not, of course, mean that things should never change. Nostalgia, as they say, is not what it used to be and progress is a wonderful thing. Just because something was, does not mean it always should be. And who could fail to notice the commitment shown by Sky to covering golf?

Everyone has highlighted the quality and breadth of their coverage, which is only right – they have thrown a slice of their considerable funds at the sport and cover golf extensively.

Indeed, people who love the sport might not be particularly bothered by the move. Well of course not. Serious golf fans are already likely to subscribe to Sky Sports.

Instead it is for the potential golfer that we should be concerned. Sky do cover sport superbly, but they are for dedicated followers of sport. They preach to the converted.

Of course there is another viewpoint. The idea that as long as investment is made in the grassroots of the game, that enough people are exposed to golf somehow – getting mini-golf into schools etc, spreading the gospel in various ways, things will be fine. Peter Dawson was at pains to stress that there is no correlation between participation numbers and a sport's visibility on free-to-air television. I hope he is right but worry that he might not be.

To want to take up a sport you need heroes and role models. People you see and aspire to be.

A big sporting event on a free-to-air channel generates interest and chatter that nothing else can match. I'm writing this on the day of the announcement and as well as a helpful e-mail with a mocked up picture of Mark Roe beating up Peter Alliss, I've been sent the figures for a handball match on free-to-air television in France smashing national viewing records. It's hard to think of what financial incentive can adequately compensate for getting people talking about, and interested in, your sport.

It's worth noting that The Women's British Open will also be heading to the other side of the airwaves. If ever a part of the game needed to be in the mainstream spotlight, it is women's golf. National bodies such as England Golf are working very hard to increase the number of girls taking up the game. Where do they see their role models? Where is the televisual shop window for

You'll only be able to see this on Sky from 2017.



people to be idly passing by – to see Charley Hull or Michelle Wie – and to say "I fancy giving that a try"? Sky Sports is a specialist shop, The BBC is on the High Street with lots of passing traffic.

Of course the problems of falling golf participation are not as simple as whether or not it is seen by more people for two weeks of the year. It is about a number of factors, from cost to time consumption. These are the real concerns for the game. But when you are fighting these problems why deny yourself time in the spotlight to show just how good golf can be?

So now figures will be thrown around and more spin offered than on a Bubba Watson wedge.

Lots of half-truths are already presenting themselves as 'facts' and much will be made of who is to blame if, indeed, you think that blame has to be apportioned.

The BBC is somehow castigated for not digging deeply enough into its purses when the truth is that as a public company the use of the purse is rightly monitored closely and the funds often cannot match their rivals. The R&A will take some of the brickbats for letting The Open and, by extension, golf slip further into the shadows. Men who will not have taken the decision lightly are accused of knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing. Which I just don't think is the case.

I think that if there is any blame, it is simply with the fact that The Open Championship is not an A-listed event. The fact that golf does not have one event that has to be shown live on free-to-air television.

But let us try and end on a positive note. Highlights of The Open will still be shown on BBC Television as well as full coverage on BBC Radio and online. There is also the small matter of full live coverage of the weekend of The Masters on BBC TV.

Yes, for many of us it feels rather sad, but congratulations to Sky who now fit the crown jewel into their collection of golfing tournaments and will take care of it, covering the great championship with their customary zeal and attention to detail.

As we know, the wheel turns and we have to move on. And simply hope that we are being taken in the right direction.

Part of the BBC's commentary team, **Andrew Cotter** grew up tackling Ayrshire's links and plays off three. Follow him on Twitter (@MrAndrewCotter)



DENIS PUGH

These guys are good

If your handicap is four or better, you can turn pro. If you want to make it on Tour, it's a whole different story

The PGA Tour trailers on TV often finish with the slogan "these guys are good". Actually, these guys aren't just good – they are far, far better than you think they are.

Every amateur golfer has dreamed of what it would be like to be a tour professional. Some of you may be scratch golfers, or play with scratch golfers, and wonder if there is a chance you could be mixing it with the big names on Tour. Without wishing to sound negative, I hate to say that the only way most scratch golfers would make it on Tour is as a caddie or scoreboard carrier.

The majority of top professionals played to handicaps of +4 to +6 before entering the professional ranks. Some current pros still hold active handicaps, and these serve to highlight how much better than "scratch" they really are.

Bubba Watson plays off +7.7 at Isleworth Country Club in Florida, while Whisper Rock Golf Club in Arizona boasts many Tour pros as members, including Phil Mickelson (+5.2), Martin Kaymer (+6.6), Paul Casey (+6) and Geoff Ogilvy (+5.8). Obviously, if they were free to play there every week, their handicaps would be even better.

My own club, The Wisley in Surrey, has tour pros who don't have an official handicap, but I would estimate are playing off at least +6 or better.

And it's not just the quality and consistency of the scores these guys post at PGA and European Tour events that is so impressive; you have to remember that the courses they are playing are the toughest around.

They are playing off tees that make the holes extra long, rough that has been grown to be thicker than it would be the rest of the year, pin positions craftily tucked away to add drama, with lightning-fast putting surfaces that accentuate every borrow and break.

Plus, there's the small matter of the pressure of playing for your living, knowing that you need to make a birdie on this hole to pay the bills...

If a scratch handicap club golfer played a tour event, he'd do very well indeed to break 80. If he somehow bagged a spot in a Major, I'd be surprised to see him shoot anything under 90.

Ian Poulter is often used as an example that you don't need a glittering amateur career and a +6 handicap to make it as a professional. Yes, you can turn pro if your handicap is four or better, but I wouldn't rely on Poulter as evidence that doing so will kickstart a successful career, with millions of pounds in the bank, dozens of Ferraris on the drive and a Ryder Cup history few can match. Poulter's handicap seemed slightly sketchy since he had no real amateur record to speak of, and he acknowledges that he turned pro to work in a shop while practising and playing to improve his golf standard – only then was he able to compete as a playing professional.

'IF A SCRATCH GOLFER BAGGED A SPOT IN A MAJOR, I'D BE SURPRISED TO SEE HIM BREAK 90'



When Rory made his debut as a fresh-faced amateur in the 2007 Open, he was off +5.4.

If you're battling to get your handicap down to four in order to turn pro, I'd advise you to have a think about your career plan. Those who have any chance of making it as playing professionals normally fly past that point on their way to plus-figure handicaps. Even prospects in their early teens are playing off +3 or better, and even they have no guarantee of "making it".

If your dream is to be a tour professional, nothing I say can or should change that. Use that dream to fuel your determination and give your game your full commitment, working at it as much as you can, always trying to learn from others, and even helping other (less talented) players around you – you'll be surprised how much doing that can help your own game.

I only ask you to do one thing, and that is to retain your pure passion for the game.

Play golf for the right reasons. Don't see golf as your one-way ticket to easy fame and riches, because it's not. None of the current tour pros picked up a golf club for the first time thinking, 'I hope I make millions doing this'. They fell in love with the game for the same reasons we all did: the addictive sensation of hitting a good shot and the never-ending challenge to improve.

Keep playing golf for the right reasons and it will always serve you well, whether it ends up netting you a fortune or just taking 10p a hole off your mates.

Denis Pugh is a Sky Sports pundit, PGA Master Professional and coach to Ross Fisher and Francesco Molinari. Follow him on Twitter (@DPugh54)

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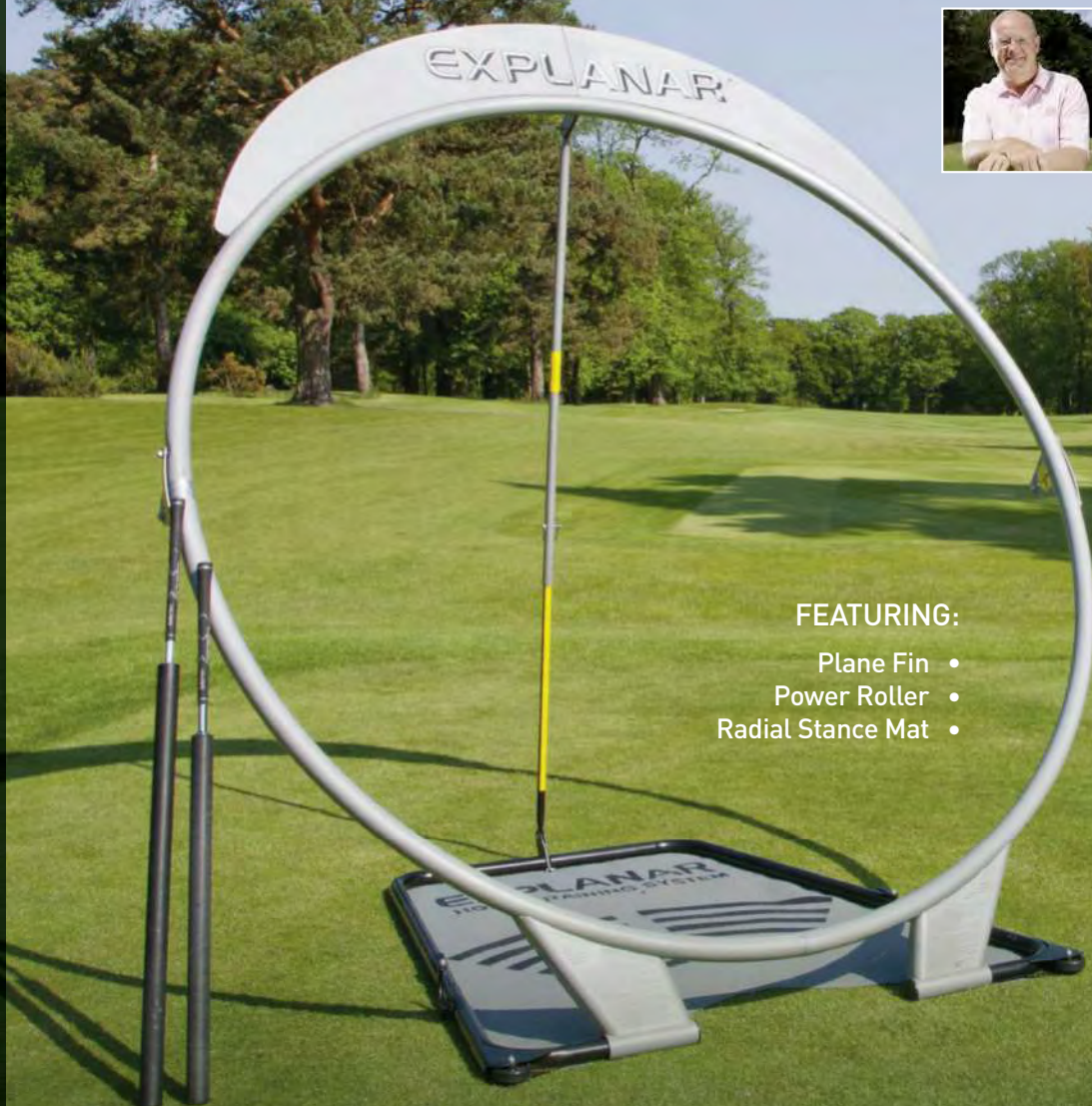
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RIP IT DOWN THE MIDDLE FROM AN ELEVATED TEE

The views might be nice, especially here at Royal County Down, but driving off a high tee can be hazardous. The first thing to consider is the wind. The ball will be in air significantly longer than normal so the wind will have a much greater influence on it. Whether it's downwind, giving you more carry, into the

wind giving you less or even in a cross wind – the ball is going to be affected more and could carry further into trouble. The bottom line is you don't make a different golf swing from an elevated tee. Make a conservative swing so you don't hit it too hard and spin it up even higher. Aim for a nice gentle tempo.

With **KEVAN WHITSON**

Head Professional at Royal County Down, Newcastle, Co Down



Tee it down

This will keep the spin off. You can also put it back in your stance. A soft swing will counter any extra back spin and should give you a low, penetrating flight that works into and downwind.



Grip it down

Some people favour holding the club down the shaft maybe by a quarter-of-an-inch. If you're a high ball-flight player then it is certainly worth considering. Moving down the shaft, quietening the swing, moving the ball position and dropping the tee will help in lowering the flight.

Keep it smooth

Because the ball is in the air for much longer, you want to swing the club smoothly to keep the spin and flight down.



With **GARY NICOL**

Tour coach
& co-founder
of Tour Pro
Experience
Golf School at
Archerfield.
tpegs.com



Fundamentals

A SIMPLE THREE-STEP PLAN TO END THE MYTHS OF ALIGNMENT

Common wisdom suggests you set up 'square' to your target – or where you want the ball to come to rest.

If every shot you hit was arrow straight, then that would make complete sense.

However, we all tend to hit most of our shots with

some degree of shape either left-to-right or right-to-left. As the clubface is largely responsible for the initial start line or launch direction, awareness of where it points at impact is essential.

Use this three-step plan to line up to the ball accurately, consistently... and realistically.

Reap what is sown

If your stock shot is a five-yard fade and you set up square to where you want the ball to finish, don't be surprised to see your ball finish five yards right of target. Always use your shot shape to work the ball back to your target, not away from it.



The takeaway...

Set up so your natural shot shape brings the ball back to the target, rather than fight it.



Clubface first

Start your address process with the middle of the clubface pointing where you want the ball to start.



Complete set up

Visualise your start line and shot shape as you complete your set up to allow for your tendency.



Initial start line

Trust your swing and focus on your start line. Your natural shape will bring the ball back to your target.

With **JON WALLETT**

European Tour coach and director of the Elite Coaching Golf Academy



Fundamentals

ADD POWER BY BUILDING THE PERFECT POSTURE



1 Stretch out your arms

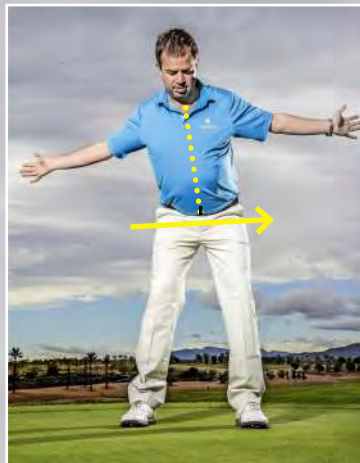
Stand straight with your arms outstretched and your feet at stance width. Set your shoulders back.



2 Lean from the hips

Keeping your shoulders back, lean your upper body forward and bend your knees slightly.

The body is your swing's engine. How you position it as you address the ball dictates your ability to employ its core muscles effectively, building power that radiates outwards into your arms and club. The following four-step process will help you create the stability and body angles needed for those key muscle groups to deliver a powerful and consistent action.

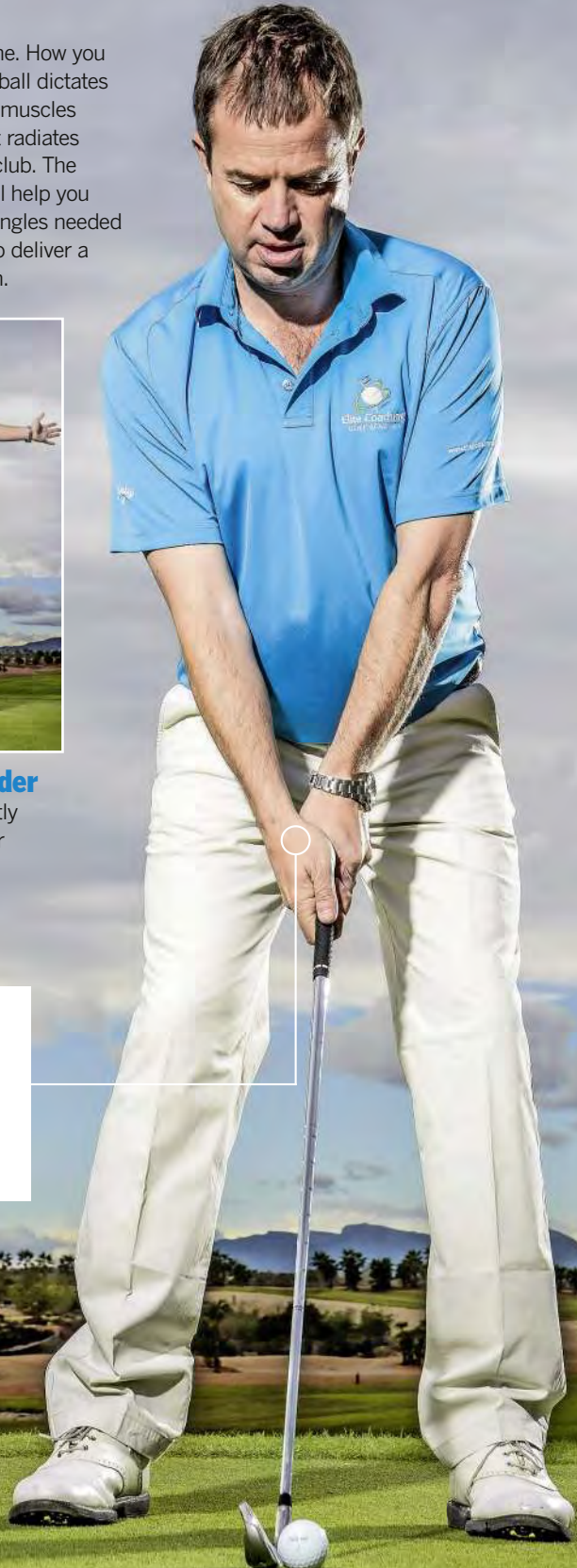


3 Drop the trail shoulder

Push your hips very slightly towards the target and tilt your upper body fractionally away from the target.

4 Take your grip

Bring your arms around and take your grip. You have now established a balanced and solid foundation for your swing.



The takeaway...

Your body is a power source. Only with this balanced posture can it work efficiently.

With **ADRIAN BISHOP**

PGA National swing and coaching tutor



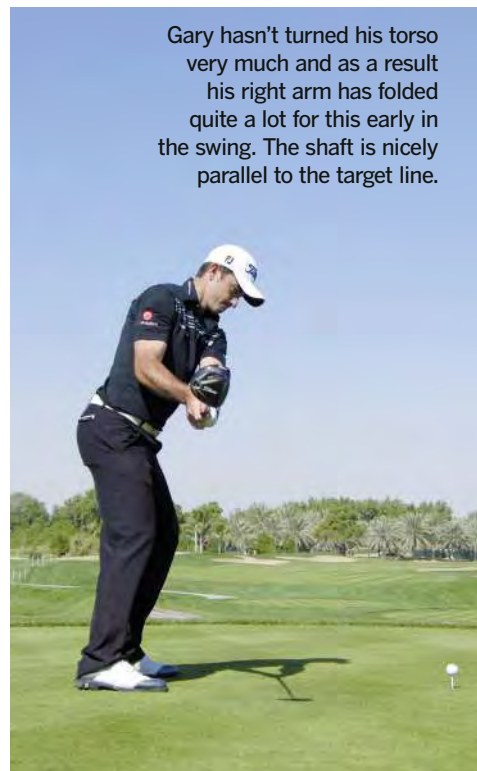
Gary has a nicely balanced address position. He has created lots of room by having his arms positioned slightly away from his body.



The first move of the backswing sees the club staying nicely out in front of his hands.



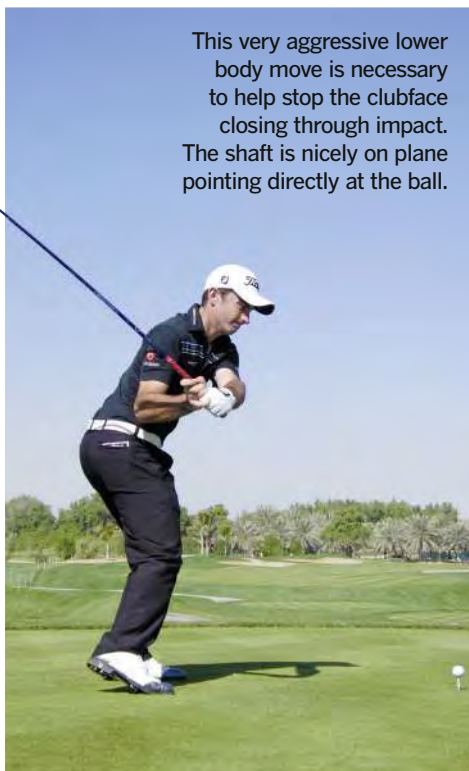
Gary hasn't turned his torso very much and as a result his right arm has folded quite a lot for this early in the swing. The shaft is nicely parallel to the target line.



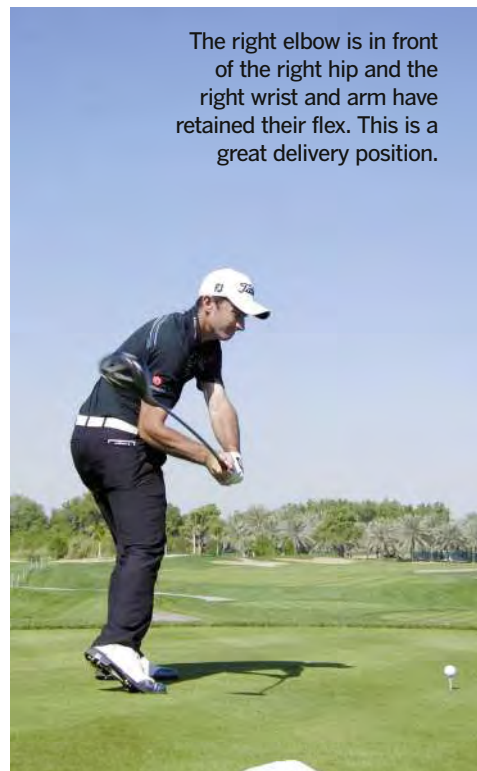
The downswing starts with a powerful squatting move. The right elbow has worked downwards. The clubface is still closed due to the bowed left wrist.



This very aggressive lower body move is necessary to help stop the clubface closing through impact. The shaft is nicely on plane pointing directly at the ball.



The right elbow is in front of the right hip and the right wrist and arm have retained their flex. This is a great delivery position.



DEBUT WINNER SETS OUT HIS STAL

At first glance, Gary Stal's win in Abu Dhabi last month was one of the European Tour's biggest ever shocks. He was ranked 357th in the world beforehand and eight shots behind Martin Kaymer ahead of the final round. However, look closer and perhaps we should have seen the Frenchman's first win coming.

The 23-year-old enjoyed a stellar 2014, missing just four cuts all year and posting top-20 finishes in the Irish, KLM and French Opens. A best finish of fifth at the South African Open the week before saw him fly to the Emirates in fine form.

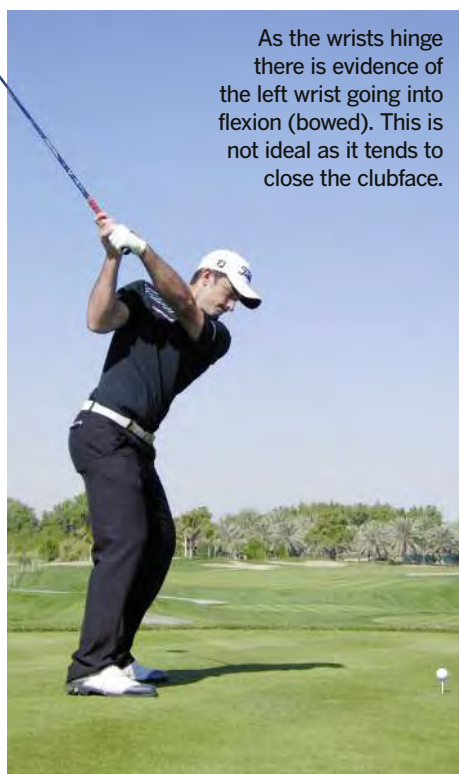
Stal's modest 277.8 yard average driving distance (53rd) that week

proved straight-hitting is his forte; he ranked 16th for driving accuracy and 13th for greens in regulation. His action is slightly unorthodox, but good enough to carry off a huge European Tour title. Here's how it works.

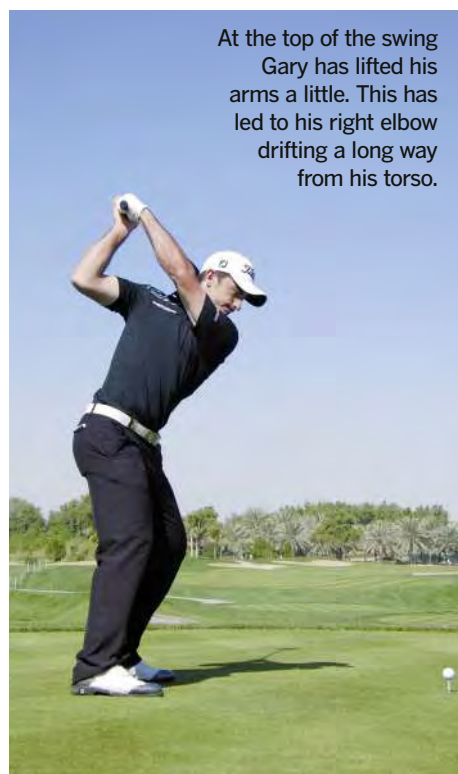




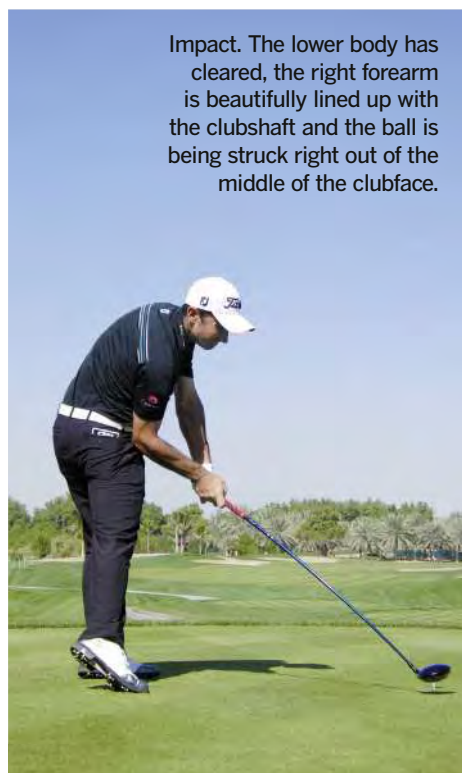
The hands are still in front of the body with the left arm just off parallel to the target line.



As the wrists hinge there is evidence of the left wrist going into flexion (bowed). This is not ideal as it tends to close the clubface.



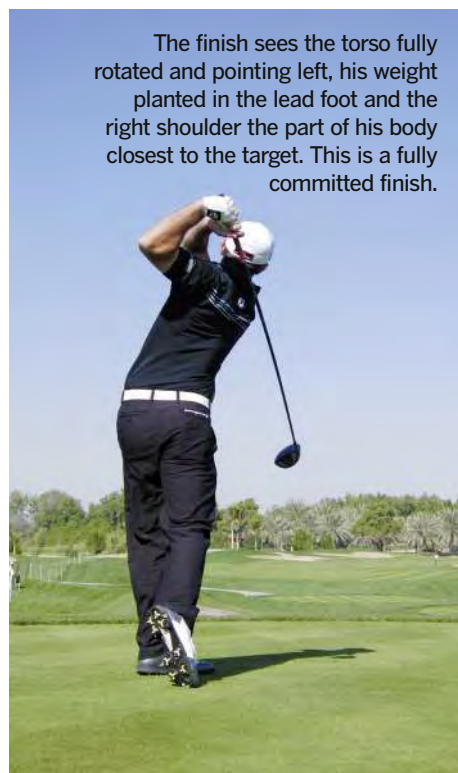
At the top of the swing Gary has lifted his arms a little. This has led to his right elbow drifting a long way from his torso.



Impact. The lower body has cleared, the right forearm is beautifully lined up with the clubshaft and the ball is being struck right out of the middle of the clubface.



Gary's shoulders have changed plane and are now vertical. This move is generally seen in players who are trying to avoid the ball going left of target. Gary needs to do this due to that closed clubface.



The finish sees the torso fully rotated and pointing left, his weight planted in the lead foot and the right shoulder the part of his body closest to the target. This is a fully committed finish.

Three things you can learn from Stal's swing

1 Control what you can control

Gary's win emphasises the importance of doing the very best you can. If you focus on what you are doing and make sure you give every shot your full attention you have done all you can. He gave himself the best chance of winning by shooting a final round 65.

2 Unorthodox can work

He has some unusual moves in his swing, but he understands what makes his swing work. Like all good players he focuses on what the club is doing and not what his swing looks like. Work with a coach to make sure you understand yours.

3 Find your own tempo

How many times do your playing partners say to you "slow down"? This can be very poor advice. Like lots of top players Gary has a very brisk tempo. This is absolutely fine as it suits him and it's easy for him to repeat.

HIS 2014 TOUR STATS

70.76 Stroke average
(50th on the European Tour)
61.20 Driving accuracy
(79th on the European Tour)
285.40 Driving distance
(111th on the European Tour)
73.60 Greens in regulation
(12th on the European Tour)
435 World Ranking at the end of 2014
(moved to 103 after Abu Dhabi)

With **GARETH JOHNSTON**

Head pro at Calcot Park, Berkshire, and part of the TG Elite coaching staff



Shot at Glen Dornoch Waterway Golf Links, Myrtle Beach. Visit: www.myrtlebeachgolftour.com

Swing path

USE YOUR LEAD ARM TO CALM THE OUT-TO-IN 'SLICE' ATTACK

Some 85 per cent of club golfers fight a slice every round. It is created by hitting across the ball from outside the target line to inside it. It can be caused by basics such as aiming left – but it is still possible to hit across the ball even with sound

fundamentals. In this article I'm going to show you a quick way to attack the ball from the inside. A simple focus on your lead arm can help you find a more neutral swing path that applies much less slicespin to the ball. Follow these simple steps...



Lead arm's aim

As you swing down work on the feeling the lead arm is pointing across the line (to the right of target for right-handers). Your swing path can't help but follow the lead arm's line; achieve this feeling and the club will attack the ball more from the inside.

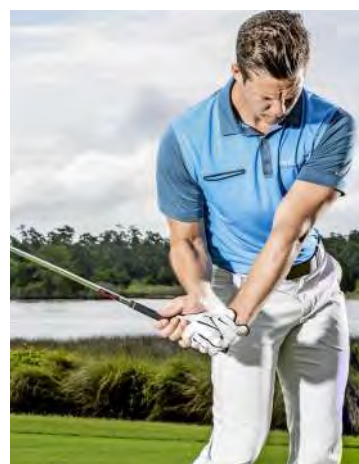
The takeaway...

Feel your lead arm aim across the target line – and keep it pinched in to your lead side.



Squeeze your shirt sleeve

Grip the club in your gloved hand. With your other hand, pinch some material from the top of your shirt sleeve and apply some pressure from your lead arm to hold the material fast against your lead side.



Keep the sleeve pinched in

The adhesion you've created between your lead arm and side should remain from address through to impact. If the gap opens up, your attack starts to shift to out-to-in. Focus on keeping up the pressure.

With ADRIAN FRYER

A fellow of the PGA based at True Fit Golf Centre, Warrington



Ball-striking

TURN AND EXTEND FOR POWER AND CONSISTENCY

Rotation in a golf swing is one vital source of power. The turn creates a stretching effect, but more importantly allows you to pass energy from your hips, shoulders, arms and wrists to your clubhead as you uncoil. There is a lot said about width in the swing, but maintaining the radius of

your arc through and beyond impact makes your swing more repeatable, stable and powerful. From differing backswings all professionals achieve great extension, where the angles between the arms, wrists and club are exploded out with both arms straightening just after impact. This is how.

1 Turn the chest

See how the chest is pointing at the clubhead. Maintaining this radius of your arc will allow you to turn fully back and extend through, while finding your swing's low-point consistently for pure striking.

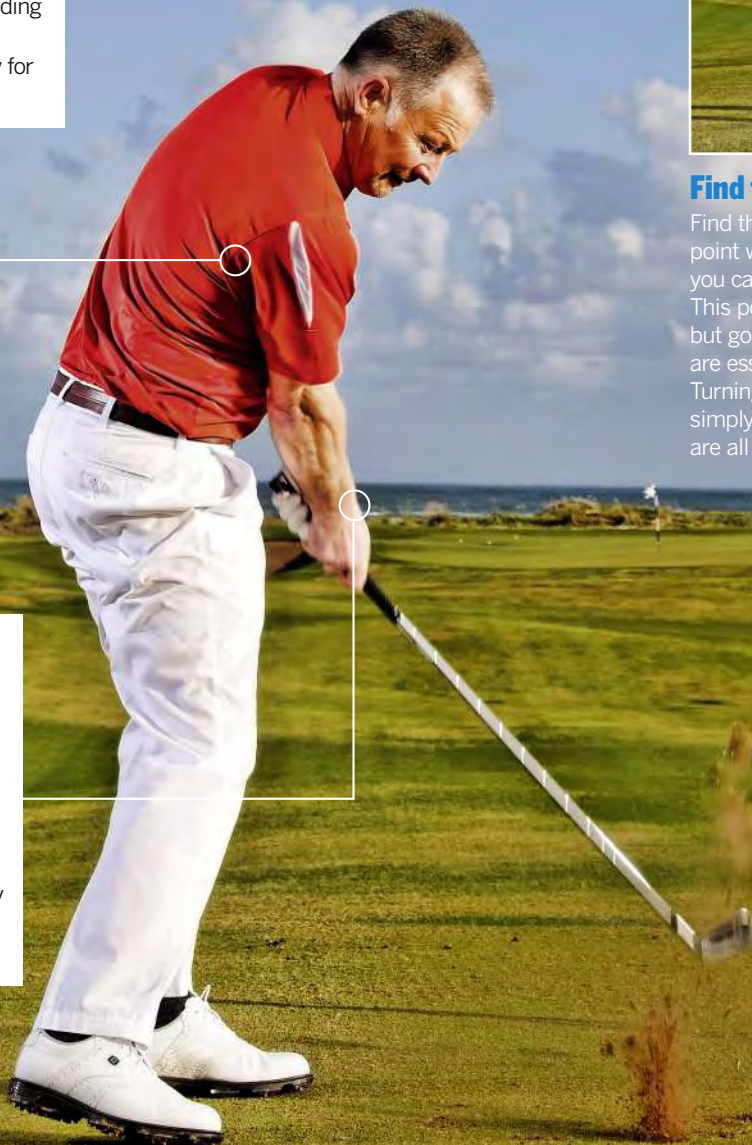


Find the top of your swing

Find the top of your backswing – the point where you rotate as much as you can without straining your body. This point is different for everyone, but good timing and sequencing are essential for maximum power. Turning the upper body too soon or simply not turning through enough are all causes of power leaks.

2 Extend arms

Your one swing thought should be to try and 'separate the heads'. By extending your arms after impact, feel as though the clubhead is moving as far away from your head as possible.



With **GARY NICOL**

Tour coach
& co-founder
of Tour Pro
Experience
Golf School at
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Pitching

USE THIS WINNING PITCH TO DEFY SOFT WINTER CONDITIONS

The combination of cold damp air and soft fairways offering minimal run can suddenly make your course play 500 yards longer over the winter. So unless you are playing from forward tees (which I'd recommend as it happens), you might find a couple of longer par 4s difficult to

reach in two shots. However, that need not mean an automatic dropped shot because with the application of good technique and tactics, you can hit it close and still leave a makeable par putt.

Improve your pitching this winter, and when summer arrives you'll reap the rewards even more.

The takeaway...

With only a slightly descending angle of attack, push the clubhead down through the ball at impact.

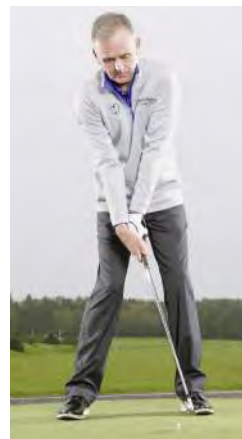
Back edge lower

The key to pitching is keeping the back edge of the sole lower for longer through impact. It's the same for irons too – look how I do that here. Even a straighter-faced 8-iron has helpful bounce (around 5°). Copy this action and you will really improve.



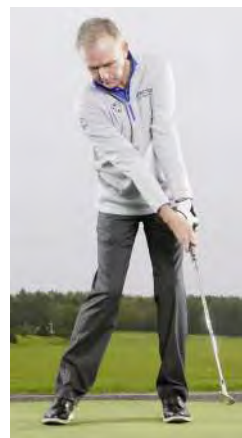
Lose the scoop

Scooping the ball is an all-too-common fault. Pitch shots should be played with a slightly descending – but not too steep – angle of attack. It is crucial for good pitching that you let the loft of the club do what it was designed to – get the ball airborne.



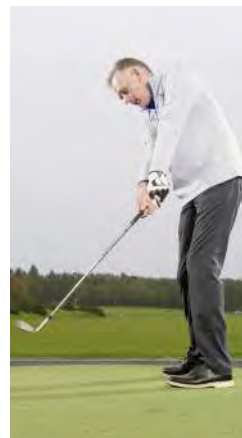
Trust the loft

This is what you should be looking to achieve through impact. By pushing the clubhead down through the ball, your arms will naturally extend with the middle of the clubface gathering up the ball and sending it towards your intended target.



Exit strategy

Try to feel you are swinging the club a little 'in to out' as the club exits impact. This helps prevent the leading edge from digging in too much. With practice, you'll start to feel the back edge of the sole (bounce) bruising the top of the turf through impact.



With **GARETH JOHNSTON**

Head pro at Calcot Park, Berkshire, and part of the TG Elite coaching staff



Shot at Glen Dornoch Waterway Golf Links, Myrtle Beach. Visit: www.myrtlebeachgolfholiday.com

Putting

STICKY TAPE AND A TEE PEG CAN SORT YOUR PUTTING STROKE

Strike the ball in the heel or the toe of your putter and both distance and accuracy are compromised. Either strike makes for poor energy transfer, robbing the putt of distance. A toe strike also opens the blade, sending the ball to the right (right-handers) while a heel strike closes it, sending

the ball left. Studies show that a 20ft putt struck just half-an-inch into the heel will come up three-and-a-half feet short and left. Mishits feel dead off the blade, and it can be hard to gauge if impact was in the toe or heel – and what to do to correct it. Here is a very simple drill to achieve both.

1. Simple set-up to gauge your strike

Find a piece of double-sided tape. Cut off a small portion, and stick it onto the toe of your putter face. Stick a tee peg into the ground. Address a ball normally, with the putter toe just inside the peg. Strike a series of putts.

The takeaway...

Improve your path – and strike – by hitting putts with tape on the toe and a tee against it.



2. When the toe strikes the tee

If the toe of the putter keeps catching the peg, it reveals a strokepath that moves the sweetspot further away from your feet, promoting heel strikes. Practise until you consistently miss the tee.



3. When the ball strikes the tape

Any tendency to strike the ball out of the toe of the putter is flagged up by the “gummy” impact of ball meeting double-sided tape. This hints at a path that moves the sweetspot towards your feet at impact. Again, practise until you always miss the tape.



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I WILL NOT B

Donald Trump says he owns the best collection of golf

WORDS KEVIN BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY HOWARD BOYLAN, GETTY IMAGES

Over the past decade or so brash billionaire businessman Donald Trump has become one of the most influential figures in the world of golf – even though he won't admit it.

He's friends with the stars. He owns some of the best courses in Britain. His courses in the USA are set to stage Majors. But he told us: "Golf isn't my major business... I just love it and have a lot of fun with it."

With 18 prestigious courses across the globe in his portfolio, the outspoken Trump's golfing

ambition seems to be world domination. But from his office in Trump Tower, New York, the man reputed to be worth nearly \$3 billion told *Today's Golfer* he's more than happy with his golfing lot and isn't currently looking to expand his empire.

He stressed: "I've no interest in taking on any other projects at the moment because I just can't top the threesome of Turnberry, Doonbeg and Aberdeen. Where am I going to find 500 acres on the Atlantic? Where are you going to find another Turnberry? Turnberry is one of the great places of the world. It's just

about everybody's favourite course. So where are you going to find places like this?

"We have Aberdeen, Turnberry and Doonbeg, I call it the Trump Triangle. They're all extra special... though if I can find somewhere else unique I'd be interested. But at the moment I have no interest and I don't think there is anywhere around."

He is spreading his wings, though, recently revealing he's partnering with Tiger Woods on a new course in Dubai. We asked him about that, plus his other UK courses, in a wide-ranging exclusive interview...



E TRUMPED

courses in the world. So what's next? Improving them!



You're a successful businessman, a TV personality, a potential politician... so why have you got involved in golf?

Well, I have friends that are very successful people and they love to garden. And I like to garden too – just in a much bigger way! All my courses do very well. They are all winners, top of the line. I started off building them, and then I started buying them. And I like buying them better. But I don't buy everything going – I turn down 10 for every one I buy – and I only buy if it's the best, or can be the best. I view it as a business, while others would be

looking for a quick return. I'm looking to make an amazing place; the return will come.

What are the big factors when you choose a course to build or buy?

I believe in location and great courses. Look, somebody made the statement that Donald Trump has built or owns the greatest collection of golf courses, ever, in the history of golf. And I believe that is 100 per cent true.

Have you got a favourite course you own?

I'm proud of all my golf courses, but Turnberry ➡

The Big Interview

is Turnberry. It's one of the great courses of the world, though the R&A would like to make certain changes to the course so we'll be doing that. For decades they wanted certain changes made to the course, but there's never been an owner of Turnberry who understood golf. Until now.

So how do you plan to change it?

There are plans to turn the 9th hole into a par 3 shooting over the sea – that would be phenomenal – plus moving the 11th hole out on top of the cliffs. Right now it's a little mundane... we want to add even more excitement! Oh, and ideally we'd bring the 18th tee closer to the ocean: if we had it on the cliffs the tee shot and the views of the 18th would be incredible.

There will be people who say don't mess with it – how do you respond to them?

Everybody loves Turnberry, so we'll be careful – we'll be doing the changes in strict co-ordination with the R&A. We're going to get together to make the changes that they've wanted to do for over 30 years and we'll start about a month after the course has hosted the Women's British Open in the last week of July.

Any other plans for the resort?

When I've finished with the Ailsa, we're going to be completely renovating the second course – the Kintyre – which will be turned into a brand new course. It's a good course, but hasn't been maintained properly, so we'll be putting in new sprinklers (on both courses). In addition we'll build a brand new mini course, a par 3, at the base of the hotel. That's under construction now and will be a good, fun place to play when it's done. The work is being carried out by Brit Martin Ebert, a terrific guy, who has been working on Turnberry for 15 years. Mark my words, it will be magnificent when it's all completed.

We're also hearing there might be plans for the iconic lighthouse, too.

We're turning that famous lighthouse into a halfway house which will be the world's greatest: there will be no halfway house like it!

Your first and most famous course in the UK is in Aberdeen. That had a difficult birth – with planning issues and demonstrations from locals. How are things now?

Trump International in Aberdeen has been a great success, and has got phenomenal ratings. Right now I'm building a permanent clubhouse which is going to be beautiful and will be ready to open in time for the new season. We'll be very proud of it.

Anything in the pipeline in Aberdeen?

I will build a second course in Aberdeen.

Turnberry's par-4 9th could be turned into a par 3 over the sea.



'WE'RE TURNING TURNBERRY'S LIGHTHOUSE INTO A HALFWAY HOUSE'

I held off building the planned second course and hotel because of the offshore windmills, but that's a battle I'm winning and frankly the recent drop in fuel prices make the windmills totally uneconomic: they were uneconomic at \$100 a barrel; at \$50 a barrel they don't make sense at all. I'm in court to stop them because I don't want them to blight a magnificent landscape like they have elsewhere in Scotland. I did Scotland a big favour, believe me.

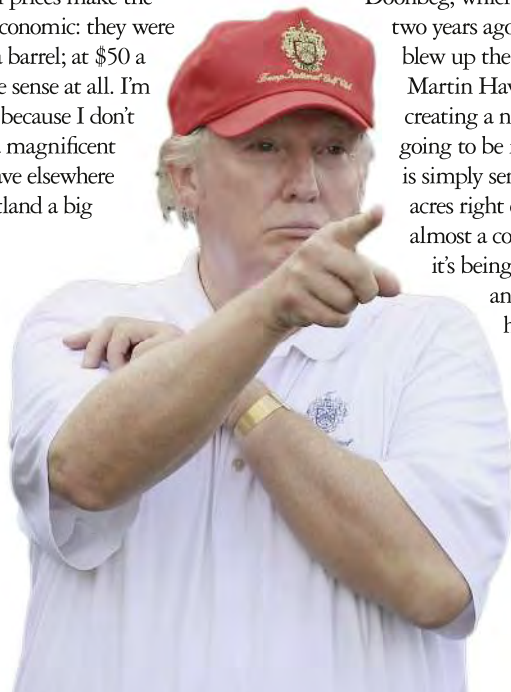
How do you think you're perceived in the city?

I have such tremendous love for the people of Aberdeen and they love what I've done. It's interesting that a

couple of people can create the feeling that what I did wasn't popular, when in fact we have a tremendous popularity. But people don't write about that; they write about some guy who wanted to get more money than his land was worth.

Tell us about your most recent project in Europe, Greg Norman's links at Doonbeg.

I'm very excited about what we're doing at Doonbeg, which I bought nearly two years ago. Basically we blew up the course and I hired Martin Hawtree, who is creating a new course, and it's going to be incredible. The land is simply sensational – 500 acres right on the Atlantic. It's almost a complete rebuild and it's being done in two phases and we're about halfway there. It will be open this summer as we had 22,000 rounds on it last year, so it's hard to just close it. Phase two happens next



Can Doonbeg really be improved that much? Trump says he can.



winter and when complete in around a year's time it will truly be one of the world's great courses.

How proud are you that your courses in the US have been chosen to stage Major championships? (He's got the 2015 Women's British Open at Turnberry, the 2017 Senior PGA at Trump National GC, Potomac Falls and the 2017 US Women's Open & the 2022 US PGA at Trump National Bedminster.)

It's fantastic. Bedminster is the youngest course ever to get a PGA in 2022. It's a great honour.

Apart from Turnberry, do you think we'll see big events at your other UK courses?

The tours are talking to us about Aberdeen – we haven't decided what to do yet, but we certainly have a lot of options. We want it to be perfect before we do anything. I've got high hopes too that a US Open will be one day played at Ferry Point, a Jack Nicklaus Signature course which has been under construction for 30 years: I took it over 18 months ago and it's right next to Manhattan. It's unique. When completed (it opens this spring) there will be a Championship course just five minutes out of Manhattan.



'WINNING SOLVES A LOT OF PROBLEMS, AND THAT WILL SOLVE THEM FOR TIGER'

Your most recent project is with Tiger Woods in Dubai. How did that happen?

It's great to be working together with Tiger Woods on Trump World Golf Club, Dubai. I've already done one course there with Olympics course designer Gil Hanse and it's been a big success and now we're doing one with Tiger in Dubai. Unfortunately the market crashed on Tiger's previous Dubai course project but that wasn't his fault.

You're friends with him – so where do you think Tiger is in his career right now?

Tiger has now got tremendous pressure on him, but he's been the greatest pressure player, so maybe it makes it better. Pressure makes some people better, so if that's the case, he'll win by 100 strokes because nobody has ever had this kind of pressure. Winning solves a lot of problems, and I think that will solve the problem for him. I think winning is going to be very important for Tiger.

How is your own game at the moment?

To be honest, my own golf game probably isn't as good as my courses (he plays off four) though if you'd asked me that question about a month ago I was playing the best golf of my life. But this month I'm not doing so well. It's a tough game. Having said that, I've played pretty well down the years and have won 18 club championships.

Golf is a unique sport. I've seen a lot of

good athletes, great athletes, who are not good at golf and they'll never be good at golf. I know people who practise all the time and they're terrible golfers, too. I think innate ability is more important than practice, though practice can hone ability and make it better. I think you realise you have talent for the game fairly early on.





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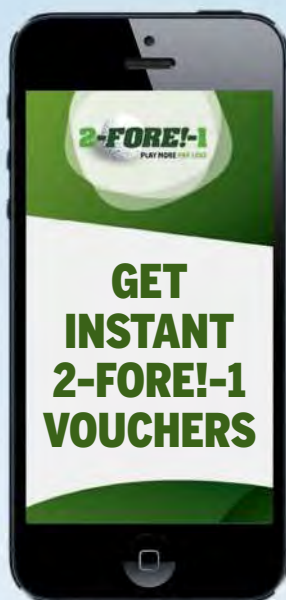
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THE POWER ISSUE!

Hit the drives of your life in 2015 with 42 pages of great advice from the world's biggest bombers, plus our giant test



INSIDE...

- 50** Justin Rose shares his five keys to really rip it
- 56** 29 of the latest drivers tested... which is best?
- 70** A day in the life of a long driving world champ
- 75** The A to Z of distance, to help you hit it further

The Power Issue

GET READY TO RIP IT!

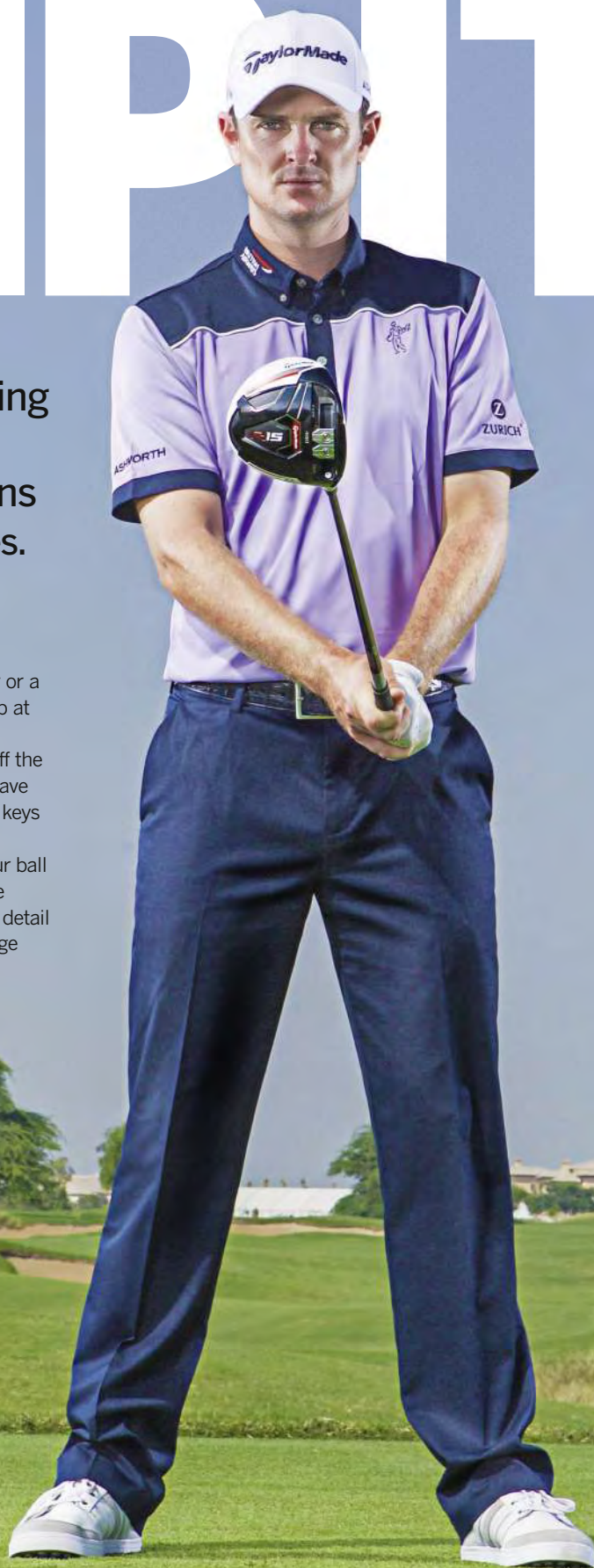
Forget one-piece takeaways and swing plane. World No.6 Justin Rose explains how to bomb drives.

WORDS ROBBIE GREENFIELD

PHOTOS HOWARD BOYLAN

Whether you're a club golfer or a Tour Pro trying to fly a trap at 300, we're all constantly searching for those few extra yards off the tee. Over the course of my career, I have gained a better understanding of the keys needed for generating power.

From simple tips like adjusting your ball position, to more complex moves like transition, over the next six pages I'll detail the areas you should focus on for huge power gains this season.



1

Favour the right side

To generate power, you want to get onto your right side (for right-hander) at the top of your swing. Where you start at address is personal: some players like to spread their weight evenly; others like to feel like they are pre-setting weight on the right.

The set-up

One of the biggest tendencies I see in amateurs is that they tend to have the ball position way too far back for a driver. That means they hit down on the ball, which is not the best way to achieve optimal launch conditions. I encourage most amateurs to get the ball further forward in their stance. The textbook says left heel, but I don't even mind it off the left toe. When you do have the ball further up in your stance, it gives you a feeling of having so much more time in your downswing. When the ball is too far back, a lot of golfers get really stuck at impact – they tend to stand up on it to create a bit of extra room in which to swing their arms. With the ball positioned further forward, you can hold your posture and your angles better, lag the club and then release it properly, catching the ball on the upswing.

60%

40%

Why I pre-set weight

For me, if you can start 60/40 in favour of your right side, you can focus on making a powerful turn in your backswing without worrying so much about lateral weight shift. Instead of swaying onto your right side, you'll be loading up your right glute.

Backswing

A lot of golf instruction promotes a 'one-piece' takeaway, but I hate that phrase – I think it's misleading. If you move everything away in one piece, your swing is immediately out of sync. Think of it this way: the clubhead is the most distal point on the arc; it has the furthest to travel. When you reach the top, your shoulder turn, arms and the clubhead should be getting to where they need to be at the same time. If you do a one-piece takeaway, you've had too much early rotation in your body and the club hasn't travelled far enough. From there, all you can do is lift your arms to the top, which not only gets the club off line, it is a massive power leak.

How to start it all off

Work to develop a feeling of the club starting, then your hands, then your arms and then finish with your turn. That's where I create my power. By finishing the backswing with a turn, I'm really coiling up ready to unleash maximum speed.

2

Set the club the right way

Because you need to get the club moving before making too much body rotation, the wrist hinge (or 'setting' the club) is key. Feel like you're pointing both thumbs to the sky. Don't confuse hinging your wrists with flipping the club inside the line. You want to feel that as your backswing reaches halfway, the butt of the grip is pointing down to the ground. The further you stand from the ball, the flatter you're going to set it, but the wrist action remains the same. The lie angle of the club dictates how it's going to look; being the longest club, the driver will set the flattest.

3

Effective coil

I'm very right-sided in my 'feels' when it comes to building resistance in the backswing. Some really big feels for me are to keep a lot of pressure through my right heel, but I also like to feel that I'm planting my right big toe in the ground, too.

A lot of it is the proprioception I have through my feet, and I work really hard in the gym doing a lot of balance work to improve those feels. So when I get into my backswing, everything is working into my right foot, right quad, right glute. That's where I create my power. I think amateurs tend to move weight to the outside of their back foot but you should avoid this. My feels are to work into the inside of my right side.

The right time to stop

When my right hip stops moving back, that's the end of my backswing. My arms may run on a little, but you can think of that as beginning your transition. Once that right hip stops moving back, you've reached the end of your backswing range of motion.

The transition

Transition is the hardest part of the swing. It separates average players from good players, and good players from great players. You can have your swing looking pretty tight on camera, but it's the synchronisation of your transition

that's the key. We all know guys on tour generate a lot of what's known as clubhead 'lag', whereas amateurs may tend to lose their angles from the top. How do you generate lag? By driving forward. The best way I can describe this move is that it's momentarily lateral, then rotational. Your hips

bump towards the target then start to rotate towards it. It's by no means easy, but that's why transition is such a critical move to get right. My advice is simple: The later you can hit the ball, the longer you can hang onto those angles, the more clubhead speed you will generate.

Keep your height

Let the arms drop

Here's a thought that ties my whole swing together: When I start the downswing, I let my arms drop halfway down as my shoulders stay closed to the target. I often rehearse this move.



4

Then let it go!

With all that leverage from the ground, I can push off and release the club powerfully into the ball. If I've stayed "in the shot" and kept my connection to the ground, I'm ripping it down the middle.

Store the power

The key moment of my downswing is when I'm halfway down. Here, I'm focused on storing power and maintaining my height. I keep up the pressure into the ground through my feet.

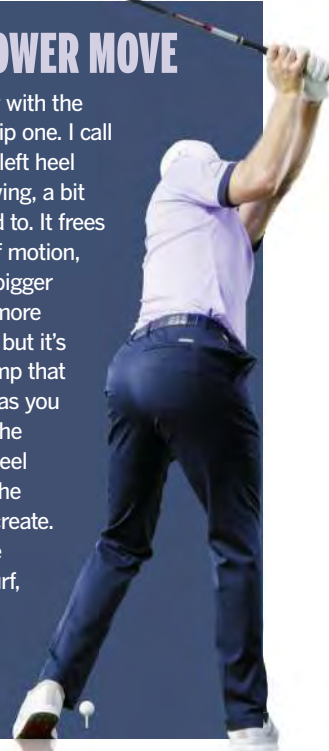
Upswing for distance

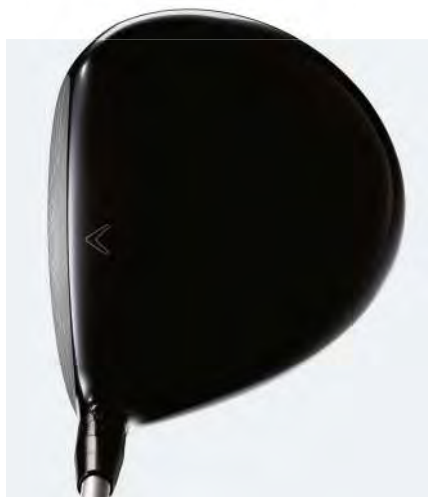
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I don't really like the term 'swing plane' to be honest. I see the swing as an arc. So based on where I put the ball in my stance dictates how the club is travelling through impact. If I put the ball back, I feel like my club is travelling to the right, and vice versa if it's farther forward, it's travelling to the left. Without changing too much in my swing, by altering my ball position I'm effectively changing how the club is behaving through impact. With a driver, I'm swinging at it one or two degrees on the up, and if you're doing that you can afford to swing a little bit out to the right on it. With your driver, it's imperative to get that feeling of staying behind the ball to enable you to catch the ball on the upswing. Feel like you're coiled onto your right side at the top, and from there, you're almost rotating off that right-sided axis.

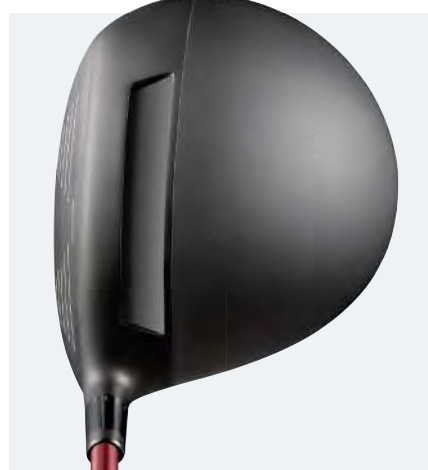
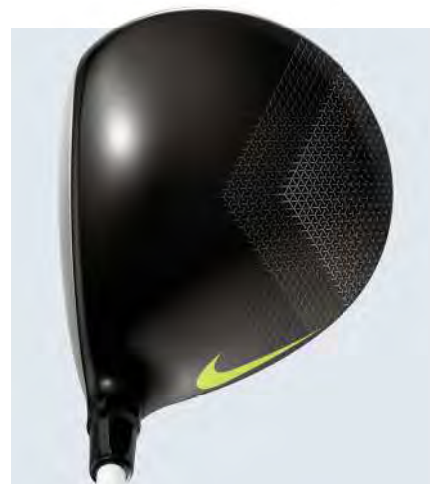
**MY SECRET POWER MOVE**

I do have an extra gear with the driver when I need to rip one. I call it the leg-kick. I let my left heel come up in the backswing, a bit like Jack Nicklaus used to. It frees up some extra range of motion, for a bigger arc and a bigger turn. It also gives you more scope to create speed, but it's vital how you then stomp that heel back into the turf as you start the downswing. The harder I push my left heel back into the ground, the more lag and speed I create. And the more pressure you can exert on the turf, the more that is going to be available to you to thrust through impact.





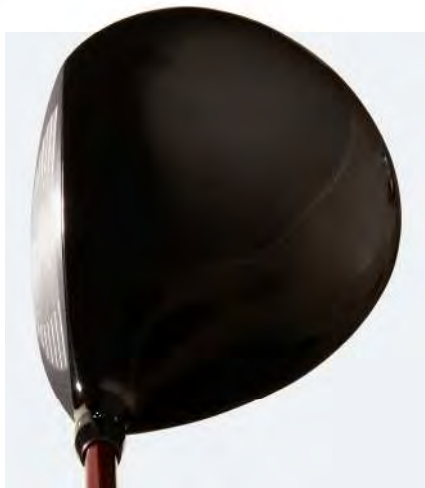
THE 2015 DRIVERS TEST



Driver tech has taken another step forward this year, with more adjustability than ever and new aerodynamic shapes. We've put 29 clubs through their paces; which is best?

WORDS JOEL TADMAN PICTURES TOM CRITCHELL, ANGUS MURRAY





Today's **Golfer** **THE TEST**

Let the big dogs eat!

We kick off our exhaustive 2015 testing programme with the club we all love most – the driver. This year has seen a raft of new launches, all claiming to help you hit the ball longer and straighter. But with so many decent options out there, how do you decide which one to buy? This test has been done by four golfers of various abilities, from pro to a 15-handicapper with an average club speed. Their feedback and Trackman stats helped us decide which were the best drivers of 2015 – and which ones you should go and try.

Our panel of testers



James Ridyard

Handicap: Pro
Longest carry: 266 yards
Clubhead speed: 108mph



Joel Tadman

Handicap: 4
Longest carry: 251 yards
Clubhead speed: 106mph



Joel Cunningham

Handicap: 8
Longest carry: 206 yards
Clubhead speed: 85mph



Robin Hopkins

Handicap: 15
Longest carry: 212 yards
Clubhead speed: 93mph

Our test ratings

TG doesn't shy away from rating and ranking products. This year we are awarding winners in the following categories:



Recognition in one area of performance



Bronze Award:
Overall ranking of 8.5



Silver Award:
Overall ranking of 9



Gold Award:
Overall ranking of 9.5 or above

The Test Drivers

29 drivers, three days and plenty of aching arms afterwards!



The Belfry

Where we tested

The Belfry Hotel & Resort is steeped in golfing history and provides the perfect getaway for any golf break, with the three stunning golf courses accompanied by the luxurious hotel, fine dining experiences and state-of-the-art leisure facilities.

The PGA National Golf Academy offers expert tuition for golfers of all levels and aligns with the renowned Golf Shop on site to allow golfers to be custom fit for the latest products from leading brands in the dedicated custom-fitting suites.

■ Visit www.TheBelfry.com or call 01675 470256 for information.

HOW WE TESTED 29 DRIVERS

Our testing panel includes two readers, equipment editor Joel Tadman and TG pro James Ridyard, from the Bedford Golf Club. James is a qualified club fitter, an expert in the laws of ball flight and has no brand affiliation, ensuring he offers honest and uncompromised club advice.

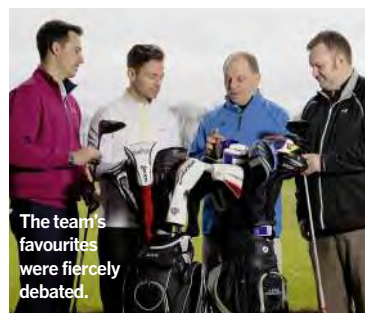
Our driver test took place over three days in one of The Belfry's custom-fitting bays using a Trackman launch monitor. We based our rankings out of 10 on opinion, feel and fact.

■ For Opinion we looked at four areas the manufacturers value when developing a club. Looks may not affect performance, but can make a difference to the confidence we feel at address. They can also influence our ability to aim the face. Feel and sound are similarly subjective, but we all know the sensation we want at impact. Forgiveness is, again, hard to quantify; only the golfer knows how well the club has rescued a poor strike. But to provide more insight into how well each driver performed on mishits, James used a fine film of powder-based foot spray on the face

to ascertain strike points without affecting spin or lubricating the contact between ball and face.

He hit one shot from the heel and toe within 20-25mm of the centre of the face, ensuring the strike point wasn't overly high or low. He looked mostly at ball speed, smash factor and the ball's direction on these shots. Other testers were given access to this data when giving their forgiveness mark, but it was not used to solely formulate the final mark.

■ New for this year is an Innovation category. This is our panel's opinion on how the club's technology advances the category, how well executed it is and how well the tester felt it enhanced the club's performance.



The team's favourites were fiercely debated.

■ As for Fact, we wanted to compare the performance of each driver fairly. Golfers of different abilities are better suited to one driver over another, so rather than comparing the performance of the clubs from person to person, we ranked the performance against the player's best drive of the day. That way, clubs are ranked against each other for each individual.

We recorded the distance and dispersion of each drive, and noted how far each shot finished away from the player's best drive. We then took an average and gave it a rating out of 10 using a sliding scale. Performance was given double the weighting when creating the overall mark.

WHO TOOK PART

We invited all major manufacturers to be involved in our test, and gave them the chance to come along on the first morning and fit our testers. James was also on hand to fit the optimum loft, lie and shaft spec to each tester based on their swing characteristics. Manufacturers supplied us with an array of lofts with shafts that incur no upcharge at retail from all the 2015 models they wished to be included.



MD Golf Superfit

£169.95

Tech: Features an upgraded Kuro Kage black stock shaft, a straighter front edge, polished PVD finish and adjustable loft.

JR tested: 9° stiff

Distance: 246 yards **Dispersion:** 11 yards

■ Looks large at address, which may instil some confidence for many. Distance was a little below average but it performed well on off-centre hits, perhaps down to the triangular, high MOI head design.

JT tested: 9.5° stiff

Distance: 239 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards

■ Club speed came down but the shaft felt stable through the hit. It sits slightly closed, which will appeal to slicers. Tended to miss right and has an unusual sound to it.

JC tested: 12° stiff

Distance: 191 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ Off-centre hits didn't curve as much as I was expecting. Large head and quality finish boosted confidence, dispersion was pretty tight. Decent performance given the price.

RH tested: 11.5° stiff

Distance: 192 yards **Dispersion:** 12 yards

■ Felt quite weighty, like I had to work harder to get results. But I liked the shape of the head and it felt solid at impact.

- ✚ Confidence-inspiring head shape. Generally forgiving and offers good value.
- ✚ Loud, tinny sound at impact.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 7.5 Feel/Sound: 7
Forgiveness: 7.5 Innovation: 7
Performance: 7

7

Web: www.mdgolf.co.uk



Yonex XP

£249

Tech: Heavier head and grip combined with a lighter shaft creates a counterbalanced club that helps increase ball speeds.

JR tested: 9° stiff

Distance: 245 yards **Dispersion:** 10 yards

■ For me, the crown colours spoil what is a nice head shape. It felt powerful from the sweet spot. Overall distance was OK, but off-centre hits lost a fair amount of ball speed.

JT tested: 9.5° stiff

Distance: 240 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ The crown design works for me, it's bold but subliminally helps position the ball centrally. The head feels heavy but it wasn't cumbersome to swing, it just seemed to lack help when I didn't catch it.

JC tested: 12° stiff

Distance: 189 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ Looks really cool, but I didn't get the distance I was hoping for, perhaps because my spin numbers were quite high.

RH tested: 9.75° regular

Distance: 204 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards

■ It's a good-size head and I felt in control of it at all times, very easy to hit with ample forgiveness on offer. Very impressed with this, certainly in my top five performers.

- ✚ Bundles of shelf appeal. Feels well balanced and powerful at impact.
- ✚ Didn't travel as far as the feel suggests.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 7.5 Feel/Sound: 8
Forgiveness: 7 Innovation: 7.5
Performance: 7.5

7.5

Web: www.yonex.co.uk



Adams XTD

£299

Tech: 'Cut-Through Velocity slot' technology increases ball speeds on off-centre hits. Loft and lie adjustable up to 1.5° via the hosel.

JR tested: 10° stiff

Distance: 252 yards **Dispersion:** 10 yards

■ Nice profile and matt finish. The slot isn't off-putting, if anything it helps with alignment. It was noticeable how heel and toe impacts helped bring misses back online with minimal loss of ball speed.

JT tested: 10.5° stiff

Distance: 239 yards **Dispersion:** 9 yards

■ The slot didn't suit my eye and the face looks rounded. It's loud at impact, but felt hot from a wide area. Not as much distance as I was expecting despite a strong flight.

JC tested: 12° stiff

Distance: 199 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ I got a mid-to-high flight without too much spin. The slot does help alignment, but maybe future versions could add in the Ghost Slot we see in Adams' hybrids.

RH tested: 11.5° stiff

Distance: 194 yards **Dispersion:** 14 yards

■ Once you get past the look, it's quite easy to get on with. Powerful feel at impact with lots of help on poor strikes.

- ✚ Powerful feel from a wide area on the face. High-launch head will help many.
- ✚ Slot on top will divide opinion.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 7 Feel/Sound: 7.5
Forgiveness: 8 Innovation: 7.5
Performance: 7.5

7.5

Web: www.adamsgolf.com



Yonex Z-Force

£179

Tech: Aimed at slow swingers seeking more spin. Higher MOI comes from a weight-saving 'OctaForce' crown. Adjustable loft up to 1.5°.

JR tested: 9° stiff

Distance: 254 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards

■ Delivered on its high-spin promise, I was at over 3000rpm. The head shape is large and rounded and the flight was pretty high. I can see it benefiting slow swing speeds but I actually hit it surprisingly well.

JT tested: 9.5° stiff

Distance: 242 yards **Dispersion:** 13 yards

■ Loved the feel at impact, it had a muted sound but felt incredibly solid and powerful. It's long from front-to-back but the dark blue crown and graphics work for me.

JC tested: 12.5° stiff

Distance: 189 yards **Dispersion:** 2 yards

■ I seemed to get a strong flight but wasn't rewarded with distance, surprising given the technology is aimed at a golfer like me.

RH tested: 10.5° stiff

Distance: 202 yards **Dispersion:** 9 yards

■ Busy on top and felt/sounded hollow and tinny but performed admirably. It seemed to match up well with my swing speed and was forgiving, too.

➤ Performed consistently well for different swing speeds. Confidence-boosting shape.

❑ May spin the ball too much for some.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 7 Feel/Sound: 7.5
Forgiveness: 8 Innovation: 7.5
Performance: 8

7.5

Web: www.yonex.co.uk



Benross Speed 10

£199.99

Tech: Three RIP, HOT and MAX heads offer different trajectories, each with six adjustable face angle settings.

JR tested: RIP 10° x-stiff

Distance: 246 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards

■ Classic shaped head, maybe spoiled slightly by the details on top. Excellent on off-centre hits maintaining high ball speeds from heel and toe. Slightly light swing weight made it feel uncontrollable at times.

JT tested: RIP 10° x-stiff, C-2 position

Distance: 247 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards

■ Nice matt finish but I didn't like how the face is rounded and sits forward from the hosel. I needed to add loft to boost distance but had to deal with a closed face. That said, distance and accuracy was superb.

JC tested: MAX 14° stiff, C-2 position

Distance: 196 yards **Dispersion:** 9 yards

■ Sounded a little tinny but once loft was added I got a high launch, low spin flight. Mishits still stayed very straight.

RH tested: HOT 12° regular, O-2 position

Distance: 193 yards **Dispersion:** 7 yards

■ Clean lines make it easy to align. The weight in the head felt like I could control the face. Good distance, shaft felt stable.

➤ Adjustability enhances an already strong and versatile driver line-up for 2015.

❑ Look and firm feel won't appeal to all.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 8 Feel/Sound: 8
Forgiveness: 8 Innovation: 7
Performance: 8

8

Web: www.benrossgolf.com



Mizuno JPX-850

£349

Tech: Two 8g weights can be placed in a central sliding rail, two lateral slots, or a combination to alter spin and launch.

JR tested: 9.5° stiff, weights front central

Distance: 249 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards

■ Adjustability works to control precisely how the head behaves, a discernible difference in flights achievable. Ball speed on off-centre hits suffered, but was offset by the high clubhead speed I achieved.

JT tested: 9.5° stiff, weights back central and draw

Distance: 246 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards

■ Probably one of my favourite-looking drivers on test that produced an enjoyable, dull thud at impact. The sole weight technology helps to change the flight and suit the way I deliver the club to the ball.

JC tested: 11.5° reg, weights back central

Distance: 196 yards **Dispersion:** 10 yards

■ Splitting the weights did aid dispersion but the launch was too low, so putting them back in the track helped increase launch.

RH tested: 10.5° stiff, weights central front and draw

Distance: 198 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ I love the shiny blue finish but distance was down despite seemingly optimising launch and spin through the sole weights.

➤ Unique, appealing look. Intuitive weight system that works to optimise ball flight.

❑ Small head may put off game improvers.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 8 Feel/Sound: 8
Forgiveness: 7 Innovation: 8.5
Performance: 8

8

Web: golf.mizuno-europe.com



Cobra Fly-Z

£199-£329

Tech: All three models feature a Speed Channel to aid distance. Fly-Z+ has a 15g weight that can be adjusted front to back.

JR tested: Fly-Z+ 9° x-stiff, weight forward

Distance: 256 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ The hollow, echoey sound was off-putting, but I enjoyed the mid-to-high flight with low spin. I was amazed at how much ball speed was maintained on off-centre hits... forgiveness was seriously impressive.

JT tested: Fly-Z 9.5° stiff

Distance: 244 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ I didn't spin the Fly-Z+ with the weight forward enough so I opted for the extra forgiveness of the Fly-Z in a low loft. The larger head aided confidence and control.

JC tested: Fly-Z 11° regular

Distance: 195 yards **Dispersion:** 9 yards

■ The high-launch nature of the head suited my swing. It felt hot from a wide area and more spin helped increase carry.

RH tested: Fly-Z 9.5° stiff

Distance: 197 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ I got better numbers from the standard Fly-Z, increasing the launch without adding too much spin, but it has a higher pitched sound than the Fly-Z+.

- Really does offer something for everyone's swing and colour preference.
- ❑ Good players may want more workability.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 8 Feel/Sound: 7.5
Forgiveness: 8 Innovation: 8.5
Performance: 8

8

Web: www.cobragolf.com



Wilson Staff D200

£199

BEST ON TEST
VALUE

Tech: 'Right Light' technology helps generate more club speed without swinging harder. Adjustable loft and lie of up to 1°.

JR tested: 9.5° stiff

Distance: 260 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ It felt light and long, at 46 inches it's longer than most others on test. But that said, it felt fast and effortless to swing, like the ball came off hot. It launched high, but with relatively low spin. Surprise package.

JT tested: 9.5° stiff

Distance: 244 yards **Dispersion:** 10 yards

■ Feels incredibly light; it must be one of the lightest on test, yet club speed was above my test average. It felt solid with a more pleasing sound than previous Wilson drivers.

JC tested: 13° stiff

Distance: 193 yards **Dispersion:** 7 yards

■ Effortless to swing with impressive forgiveness. Didn't get the clubhead speed increase I was expecting, but it wasn't exactly short and it was very accurate.

RH tested: 10.5° stiff

Distance: 200 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ Once I got used to the weight, one after the other flew straight. Clean look with great feel; I instantly knew I'd hit a good shot.

- Most will experience increased club speed and a more pleasing sound.
- ❑ Light feel and look won't work for all.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 7 Feel/Sound: 7.5
Forgiveness: 8.5 Innovation: 8
Performance: 8.5

8

Web: www.wilsonstaff.com



Callaway XR

£279-£299

Tech: A Speed Step crown reduces aerodynamic drag. R-Moto face lowers CG, but raises MOI. Also comes in Pro version.

JR tested: XR Pro, 11° x-stiff

Distance: 263 yards **Dispersion:** 10 yards

■ A small clubhead with little to distract and a deep face. I was able to use more loft and keep the spin low; a good combination for distance. Off-centre hits weren't the most forgiving, but it was superb from the middle. One of my longest on test.

JT tested: XR Pro head, 11° x-stiff

Distance: 248 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ Alignment is tricky, but this is a quality golf club, it feels hot and offers plenty of workability. If you prioritise forgiveness, the standard XR model has it in abundance.

JC tested: XR 12° regular

Distance: 191 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards

■ Quite low launching. The Speed Step crown seemed to help create a slight increase in club speed and also helped centre the ball on the face at set-up.

RH tested: XR 9.5° stiff

Distance: 201 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards

■ My swing speed went up by 1mph. It offers a firm feel at impact and above-average distance.

- Crown and head tech work to increase distance.
- ❑ Tricky to align the clubface.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 7.5 Feel/Sound: 8
Forgiveness: 7 Innovation: 8.5
Performance: 9

8

Web: www.callawaygolf.com



Nike Vapor

£249.99-£349.99

Tech: Speed, Pro and Flex models feature a Compression Channel that increases ball speed. Adjustable loft and face angle.

JR tested: Vapor Pro, 8.5° x-stiff

Distance: 257 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ The Pro was a good fit so didn't need the extra adjustment in the Flex. I enjoyed the penetrating flight it offered and while carry distance wasn't overly high, total yardage was up there with the rest. My clubhead speed was also 2-3mph higher.

JT tested: Vapor Flex (low), 9.5° x-stiff

Distance: 241 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards

■ I prefer the size and shape of the Speed, especially with the contrast between crown and face, but with the Flex's 'low' setting I got the high-launch, low-spin flight I wanted.

JC tested: Vapor Speed, 12.5° regular

Distance: 195 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ The low-spin nature of the head meant I had to add loft, creating a strong flight. It's got the wow factor in looks and performance.

RH tested: Vapor Speed, 10.5° stiff

Distance: 198 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ Easy to align. Struggled with face control at times, but the feel at impact was great, incredibly stable even on poor strikes.

✚ Traditional shape with a modern twist. Solid feel with ground-breaking adjustability.
 ■ Can be confusing which model best suits.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 8.5 Feel/Sound: 8
 Forgiveness: 8 Innovation: 8.5
 Performance: 8

Web: www.nikegolf.com

8



Callaway Big Bertha V-Series

£299

Tech: Lightweight with an aerodynamic shape to increase club speed. Features a Hyper Speed face and OptiFit hosel.

JR tested: 9° x-stiff

Distance: 252 yards **Dispersion:** 12 yards

■ A familiar Callaway shape. It felt easy to swing quickly and launched fairly high without too much spin for my faster swing speed. Struggled with accuracy a little.

JT tested: 9° x-stiff

Distance: 243 yards **Dispersion:** 9 yards

■ Lighter weight didn't increase club speed but distance was still impressive; there's a lot of tech in the head that aids performance. The deep face inspires confidence and it's very forgiving on off-centre hits, both in direction and ball speed.

JC tested: 11.5° stiff

Distance: 204 yards **Dispersion:** 9 yards

■ I felt I could hit it harder because it was lighter and seemed to be more forgiving. Poor strikes stayed pretty straight.

RH tested: 10.5° reg, 1° upright lie angle

Distance: 206 yards **Dispersion:** 11 yards

■ Great to look at. Though I didn't feel in total control of it during the swing, it was one of my longer clubs on test.

✚ Consensus was it feels like you can achieve more distance with less effort.
 ■ Takes time to get control of the clubface.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 8 Feel/Sound: 8
 Forgiveness: 8.5 Innovation: 8
 Performance: 8.5

Web: www.callawaygolf.com

8



Bridgestone J715

£349.99

Tech: Moveable 2g and 12g weights in the centre and heel alter launch and spin. Face and lie angle adjustment system.

JR tested: 10.5° stiff, 0.5° open, 12g front

Distance: 262 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ Strong-looking head, deep and compact. It might be intimidating for some, but better players will love it. The trajectory and spin were ideal and the adjustment via weight movement is welcome. One of the longest clubs on test for me. Very impressive.

JT tested: 10.5° stiff, 0.5° open, 12g front

Distance: 243 yards **Dispersion:** 13 yards

■ The grip and/or shaft feels very thin. I struggled with a miss to the left at times but by opening the face, and taking loft off, it allowed me to increase distance.

JC tested: 10.5° reg, 1° closed, 12g back

Distance: 196 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ A clean, classic head. It felt springy at impact, like the ball compresses then jumps off quickly without too much spin.

RH tested: 10.5° stiff, 0.5° closed, 12g back

Distance: 205 yards **Dispersion:** 13 yards

■ Superb cosmetics. I always felt in control. It might not be large, but there's lots of tech in the head to aid performance.

✚ Better players will like the deep face and compact shape. Hit the longest shot on test.
 ■ Not the easiest to align the face at set-up.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 8.5 Feel/Sound: 8
 Forgiveness: 8 Innovation: 8
 Performance: 8.5

Web: www.bridgestonegolf.com

8



Srixon Z545

£325

Tech: A low-spin driver with a 35 per cent larger sweetspot than previous Srixon models. Adjustable loft and sole weights.

JR tested: 10.5° x-stiff, 7g front, 3g back

Distance: 254 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards

■ Great look, fairly deep face and it felt heavier in my hands which I enjoyed. Difficult to hit left due to a stable shaft, which will appeal to the better player. Quite low-launching so I needed a higher loft.

JT tested: 10.5° x-stiff, 7g front, 3g back

Distance: 249 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ Love the look, the grooves on the face aid alignment. I didn't get as low spin as I was expecting, but the feel off the face was fantastic; firm and fast. The hosel settings are confusing, so be sure to get fitted.

JC tested: 10.5° stiff, 1.5° closed, 0.5° upright

Distance: 194 yards **Dispersion:** 7 yards

■ Even though it's not aimed at my swing speed, my dispersion was tight and it's one of the best-feeling drivers on test.

RH tested: 10.5° stiff, 4g back, 3g front

Distance: 197 yards **Dispersion:** 8 yards

■ Great look and feel. I hit it very straight, off-centre hits didn't curve off line too much. Overall a strong performer.

■ Clean look at address with a solid, stable feel at impact and ample yardage. ■ Low launch and spin may put off game improvers.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 8.5 Feel/Sound: 8.5
Forgiveness: 7 Innovation: 8.5
Performance: 8.5

8

Web: www.srixon.co.uk



TaylorMade AeroBurner

£269

BEST ON TEST
DISTANCE

Tech: Features a larger, deeper Speed Pocket, raised centre crown and a hosel fin designed to reduce aerodynamic drag.

JR tested: 9.5° stiff

Distance: 260 yards **Dispersion:** 13 yards

■ Not a fan of the textured crown. The light feel and long shaft (45.75in) made it feel like it was hard to control. But I hit some of my longest drives on test. Dispersion was a little loose, but still playable.

JT tested: 9.5° stiff

Distance: 251 yards **Dispersion:** 3 yards

■ The shaft instantly felt long, which I thought would reduce control, yet this was actually one of my best performers. It went a fraction higher than I'd have liked, but it was still one of my longest clubs on test.

JC tested: 12° regular

Distance: 206 yards **Dispersion:** 12 yards

■ The lightweight feel worked for me. My club speed went up by 2mph and I got some of my longest carries on test.

RH tested: 10.5° regular

Distance: 202 yards **Dispersion:** 9 yards

■ Attractive at address, sits slightly closed. Increased club speed delivered more yards. It was tricky to control at times and I'd have liked to add a fraction more loft.

■ Super long with an explosive feel.

■ Fixed hosel. Low control for fast swingers.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 7.5 Feel/Sound: 8
Forgiveness: 8 Innovation: 8
Performance: 9

8

Web: www.taylormadegolf.com

Today's Golfer NEXT MONTH



BALL STRIKING SPECIAL!

Giant irons test

The game-improver clubs that will help you hit more greens

Ball-striking tips

Simple drills to help you hit it out of the middle more often

Free face tape

Find out where you make impact with your irons



FREE WHAT
GEAR MAGAZINE
HUGE MASTERS
PREVIEW



Spoilt for choice
Testers liked having two head shapes to choose from in the 915 D2 and D3 models.

Amazing face
The face technology genuinely seemed to reduce curvature on off-centre hits.

Flawless at address
The clean look at address as well as the updated alignment aid was extremely well received.

Titleist 915 £379

Today's Golfer
BRONZE

Tech: Active Recoil Channel increases ball speeds across the face and reduces spin. A Radial Speed face boosts forgiveness on heel and toe strikes. Comes in D2 and the smaller D3 head shapes, both with adjustable loft and lie via the SureFit hosel system.

JR tested: 915 D3, 8.5° x-stiff
Distance: 259 yards **Dispersion:** 2 yards
■ It barely curves off the heel or toe. It's incredibly stable, shots really hold their start line, so dispersion is tight providing the face is relatively square at impact. It's a classic Titleist design, simple with an improved alignment aid, that sits square. Ball speed loss was minimal on off-centre hits. The only thing I didn't like was the sound – it's loud and quite high-pitched.

JT tested: 915 D3, 10.5° x-stiff
Distance: 242 yards **Dispersion:** 3 yards
■ Club speed was rewarded with ball speed and distance. It feels firm off the face and very stable at impact, especially on mishits. It's difficult to hit a bad shot with this. The sound doesn't match the subtle, understated look of the head.

JC tested: 915 D2, 13.5° reg (A3 setting)
Distance: 200 yards **Dispersion:** 3 yards
■ The more upright lie angle of the A3 setting helped keep the face closed to path, which kept the spin down despite the added loft. I found it easy to use and enjoyed the classic Titleist look at address – very clean lines and a shiny black finish. It's very forgiving on mishits and long from the middle, too.

RH tested: 915 D2, 10.5° regular
Distance: 204 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards
■ My ball speed went up despite a drop in club speed. Has a simple look at address, very traditional. It was easy to hit, aided by the draw bias of the D2 head.

■ Maintains excellent ball speed on off-centre hits. Easy to find your optimum flight with the two heads and hosel.
■ Some will find it more difficult to shape. Has an unusual sound.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 9 Feel/Sound: 7
Forgiveness: 9.5 Innovation: 8.5 Performance: 9

Web: www.titleist.co.uk

8.5



Multiple choice
The standard G30 didn't feature in our test. Instead, the low spin and straight flight versions were best-suited to our panel.



Made for speed
With the G30, testers experienced a marginal increase in club speed against their test average.



Double benefit
Some testers commented that the Turbulators also helped centre the ball on the clubface at address.

Ping G30 £299

Today's
Golfer
SILVER

Tech: Features crown 'Turbulators' that reduce aerodynamic drag for faster club speeds. Comes in standard, SF-Tec (Straight Flight Technology) which has the custom tuning port positioned toward the heel for more draw bias, and LS-Tec (Low Spin) aimed at faster swingers.

JR tested: G30 LS-Tec, 9.5° Tour stiff
Distance: 255 yards **Dispersion:** 3 yards
■ I found it quite difficult to hit off-centre, which is never a bad thing. The larger head makes the shaft feel shorter, which boosts confidence and control. I got more optimum spin rates for my swing speed with the LS-Tec, something that will apply to most fast swingers. At address, the Turbulators draw my eye towards the centre of the face. The sound

is a little tinny and high pitched.

JT tested: G30 LS-Tec, 10.5° Tour stiff
Distance: 245 yards **Dispersion:** 3 yards

■ The shaft feels short, which helped my control of the face. Using the LS-Tec with more loft helped me achieve more distance. I love the forgiveness you get from a low-spinning head. I'm not someone that likes to shape the ball too much, so the stable flight means it's a strong candidate to go in my bag.

JC tested: G30 SF-Tec, 12.66° regular
Distance: 189 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ The turbulators actually aid alignment and look quite cool. More club speed along with extra draw bias helped its performance. While I couldn't get the top

distances others were getting, I enjoyed the feel and incredible accuracy.

RH tested: G30 SF-Tec, 12.66° stiff
Distance: 191 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards
■ Offers a light, balanced feel that made control of the face simpler to achieve. The draw bias helped tighten my dispersion.

✚ Offers a very stable ball flight with a powerful impact sensation.
✚ Better players may want a smaller head.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 8.5 Feel/Sound: 8.5
Forgiveness: 9 Innovation: 9
Performance: 9

Web: www.ping.com

9



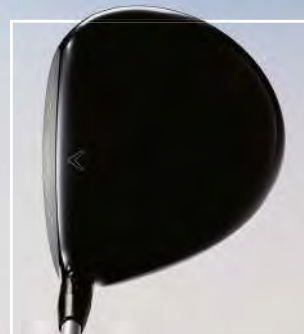
Core correction

By switching the CG position via the Gravity Core, testers could dial in those final few rpms of backspin.



Feeling good

The feel and stability at impact of both BB Alpha models was a strong contributor to its success.



Sitting pretty

The clean look at address and traditional Callaway shape was well received by our test team.

Callaway Big Bertha Alpha 815 £379

Today's
Golfer
GOLD

Tech: Larger and lighter head than the original BB Alpha and also has more draw bias. Gravity Core tech continues but you can now see its position through the sole. Callaway's new R-Moto face removes weight via internal ribs to control the motion of the face and lower the CG.

JR tested: Big Bertha Alpha 815 Double Black Diamond, 9° x-stiff, core down

Distance: 255 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards

■ A mouthful to say, but has a nice looking smaller head from Callaway, very clean lines with a hint that it's still a Callaway through the shape. It wasn't as low launching as I was expecting for a better-player club, but I still achieved relatively low spin. Offers a really solid hit at impact that translated into good distance.

JT tested: DBD, 10° x-stiff, core down

Distance: 247 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards

■ The shaft felt long, perhaps because the head is small in comparison to others on test. It provides a dull, powerful feel from a wide area on the face, solid and stable at impact. High launch, lowish spin with surprisingly high forgiveness for such a compact head. The look is very clean and sits nice and square.

JC tested: BB Alpha, 11.5° stiff, core up

Distance: 199 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ Pleasing look at address, it's easy to align and I found it to be quite low-spinning, so switching the gravity core to the 'up' position helped keep the ball in the air for longer and increased both carry and total distance.

RH tested: BB Alpha, 10.5° stiff, core down

Distance: 208 yards **Dispersion:** 6 yards

■ Can't fault the shape or size. My spin came down, but launch remained high enough to achieve some of my longest carries. Felt well balanced too, easy to hit solidly and control the direction.

■ Multiple heads and settings to achieve the best flight. Both models offer ample forgiveness for the target player.

■ Switching the Gravity Core can be fiddly.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 9.5 Feel/Sound: 9
Forgiveness: 9 Innovation: 9.5
Performance: 9.5

9.5

Web: www.callawaygolf.com



Long & straight
Moving the weights to the edges of the track didn't hinder distance but raised MOI, a winning combination.



Help at hand
Forgiveness on mishits across the face maintained impressive ball speeds.



Easy alignment
The white and black contrast amplified the face angle, helping our testers hit straighter drives.

TaylorMade R15 £369

Golfer
GOLD

Tech: Features a new Front Track positioned 12mm closer to the face than SLDR that houses two, 12.5g sliding weights that alter MOI and shot shape. The track also acts as a Speed Pocket to assist shots struck low down on the face.

JR tested: 9°, x-stiff, weights together
Distance: 260 yards **Dispersion:** 4 yards
■ I got a really stable flight even with the weights together, which is the lowest MOI setting. It looks a little more lofted than it is, but distance-wise it won't be beaten, offering a high launch with low spin. Through correct loft adjustment I lowered my spin by nearly 1000rpm and gained considerable yardage. I marginally prefer the black head, but the white looks good too, similar to the R11 which I really liked.

JT tested: 11.5°, x-stiff, weights split
Distance: 249 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards
■ The white crown combined with the black face means its angle is very prominent. When I added loft, the face angle closes and you notice this more than others, so I opted for a higher-lofted head and delofted it via the hosel. The feel is superb, firm yet springy, with a strong thud at impact, and I got the most distance with the weights split, an arrangement which also carried additional forgiveness benefits.

JC tested: 12° reg, weights slightly in toe.
Distance: 199 yards **Dispersion:** 5 yards
■ This was really easy to get on with. I like the no-nonsense white head and there's lots to tweak to get the best ball

flight in small increments. It's easy to dial in a high-launch, low-spin trajectory.

RH tested: 11° stiff, weights split **Distance:** 202 yards **Dispersion:** 7 yards
■ Adjusting the hosel and sole weights helped achieve significant improvement in launch and spin as well as shot shape.

✚ Offers more distance and lower spin than the SLDR with easier alignment.
✚ Can't adjust loft with a weight in draw.

THE VERDICT

Looks: 9 Feel/Sound: 9.5
Forgiveness: 9 Innovation: 9.5
Performance: 9.5

9.5

Web: www.taylormadegolf.com

The facts, figures and stand-out performers

See how your favourite driver stacks up against the rest

This chart takes into account the average overall distance and dispersion of each tester, combines them together and plots a point on a driving range representing each driver's overall performance.

It is designed to provide you with some

insight into how wide the appeal is for each driver by grouping the performance of different swing speeds and abilities. So we're showcasing the club's versatility, as well as how long and straight they were across the board. The dispersion element takes into

account whether the club tended to miss right or left. Our panel agreed that with the level of adjustability on offer this year, you could make the majority of the drivers suit your swing; it's just a question of finding one that fits your eye and budget.

Top performer

Across the board, the TaylorMade R15 achieved the highest ball speeds and smash factor, helping it scoop a TG Gold.



Delivering on distance

All the testers generated above-average club speeds with the TaylorMade AeroBurner, crowning it the overall longest driver on test.



King of distance

The Bridgestone J715 was one of two drivers that hit the longest shot on test, a 266-yard bomb by pro tester James.



Broad appeal

The Wilson Staff D200 driver is worth a mention here for how well it performed for different swing speeds.



Dialling in spin

By switching the FlexPod in the Nike Vapor Flex driver, tester Joel lowered his spin by nearly 150rpm, increasing carry.



All-round package

The Cobra Fly-Z+ was one of the lowest spinning drivers on test while the Fly-Z offered a strong balance of distance and forgiveness.



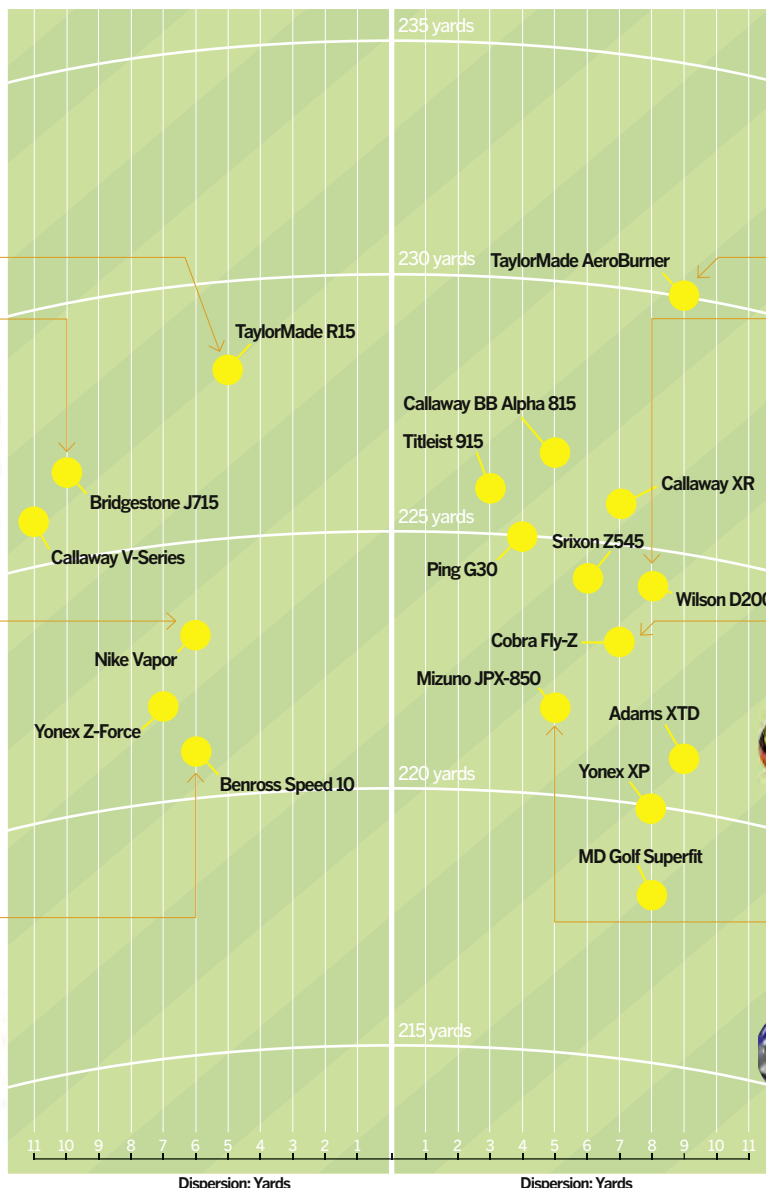
Benross is back

Being able to dial in the club's spec further significantly enhanced the Benross range, offering great value at £199.99.



Adjust or bust

Of all the adjustable sole weight systems, our panel agreed that the one in Mizuno's JPX-850 was the most intuitive and effective.



Five things you should consider when buying a new driver...

1 Get fitted

From the custom-fittings prior to testing, we found that each tester was suited to a variety of specs across the manufacturers. Gone are the days where you're simply a '9.5' stiff' man. You need to get fitted on a launch monitor to find out what works best.

2 Launch or shape?

Adjustability comes in many forms, but what do you consider a priority? If you want to alter launch and spin, drivers like the Nike Vapor Flex and Cobra Fly-Z+ are a good option, whereas if you like to alter shot shape, models like the R15 and JPX-850 will be better for you.

3 Love the look

In the grand scheme of things, performance among most of the drivers is very similar with just a few yards between them across the board. With this in mind, cosmetics play a big part. You need to be comfortable in what you look down on at address.

4 Shafts

We found on test that the shorter shafts (eg Titleist 915; 45in) enhanced control and dispersion while the longer shafts (Wilson D200: 46in) were more tricky to gain control of the face. Think about whether you prioritise distance, accuracy or a mix of both.

5 Weight

Lightweight drivers like Callaway's V-Series and Wilson's D200 are designed to help slower swingers increase their clubhead speed. This is a general theory and while it worked for most, it didn't for all. Much of it depends on how you load the shaft in the downswing.



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RAW POWER

Three hours in the gym every day...
8,000 calories scoffed... Two hours on
the range... Welcome to the world of
long driving world champ Joe Miller

WORDS JOE DOWNES PICTURES ANGUS MURRAY

Joe trains with
heavy chains
to boost his
muscles.

A couple of days before I am due to meet Joe Miller I get a message to say we can start either at a local café or at his mum's house in Potters Bar. I soon realise that food and family are a big part of his life. We settle on the latter and arrange to start at 8am.

Miller arrives just before that, pulling his sponsored BMW onto the drive before stepping out, placing two fillet steaks and half a dozen eggs on the roof and shaking my hand. It is my first sense of the power this long drive phenomenon can generate; my right hand is left reeling from the effects of his 6ft 4in, 19-stone frame.

"Good to see you, come on in," is his opening gambit, before striding towards the front door with his breakfast ingredients and three tubs of various supplements. Dressed in loose-fitting jogging bottoms, a sponsor-laden jumper and bright orange trainers (he has been up since 5.30am and has already done "30 to 40 minutes cardio work on the exercise bike at home"), Miller lets us in where we are greeted warmly and sniffed intently by family dog Archie, a Yorkshire terrier.

Other than the fillet steaks on the roof (we'll get to that) it's a fairly typical early morning. But as I am about to discover, there is nothing typical about Miller, and the daily routine he's developed to become one of the longest hitters of a golf ball on the planet...

8am Six eggs for breakfast

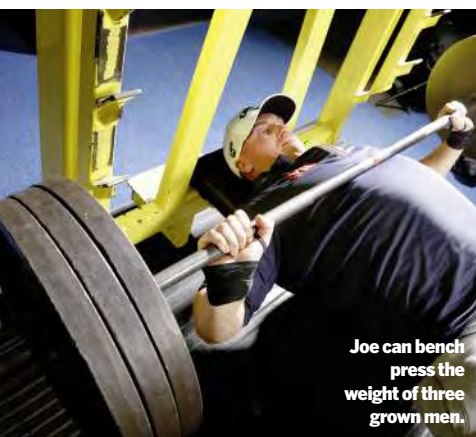
As Miller cooks up his first meal of the day – those two fillet steaks and six eggs, along with a bowl of porridge and a protein shake – I can't help but wonder what maintaining his diet must cost. "It can be a lot," he says. "But if you make friends with butchers and greengrocers it's not so bad!" Miller's diet changes throughout the year with the current omission of carbohydrates following a quiet family Christmas that involved "eating what I wanted". He needs to consume 6,000-8,000 calories every day to maintain his weight – the recommended average ■

The Power Issue

Joe plays out of the impressive Broomfield Hall in Herts.



Joe can bench press the weight of three grown men.



Putting it in context

Joe's longest drive in competition is 474 yards. That's 10 yards shy of the antenna on top of the Empire State Building and 50 yards past the longest drive recorded on the PGA Tour in 2014 – 424 yards by Bubba Watson. His swing speed regularly clocks in at 155mph, and the ball comes off the face at about 225mph. You probably swing around 97mph, with a ball speed of about 145mph.



is 2,500. "Breakfast is always high protein and around 1,500 calories to set me up for my gym and range sessions," he smiles. "It will always include eggs and red meat and be followed by a protein shake."

Miller's quiet family Christmas offered the perfect respite following a disappointing American trip when he finished third at November's World Championship. "I didn't really pick a club up for two months," he says. "It was nice to get away from golf, but I'm ready to go again and determined to be in the best shape ever this year. I didn't stop going to the gym, though. If I don't do the gym I can't relax, it's an obsession and how I let off steam. If I miss it I'm not happy!"

9.30am Leave for the gym

Taking that as a warning, we depart and climb into

Miller's spotless car for the 15-minute journey to The Works Gym in Barnet. It gives me the chance to ask Joe how he got into the long driving game. "Dad got me into golf," he explains. "I started swinging a club when I was about four. We had a field behind the house and we'd go out and smack balls for ages. I was 11 when I started

Joe's food routine

■ **9am:** Porridge, fillet steak and six eggs. Green tea and a protein shake

■ **12.45pm:** Protein shake

■ **1.30pm:** Fillet steak and six eggs. Green tea

■ **4.30pm:** Protein shake

■ **7pm:** Fillet steak or chicken and vegetables

■ **9.30pm:** Protein shake
Snacks: Peanut butter and coconut oil

■ Diet rules

Consume between 6,000-8,000 calories every day
No processed or fast food
Avoid carbs and eat healthy fats like nuts.

playing properly, though, and even then I hit it a mile. I wasn't massive but my swing was quick, I just had no control. It could go anywhere!"

Miller was far from a one-trick pony in those formative years, though. "My game was good," he says. "I was club champion and got down to three. I thought I could make it as a pro, and the long drive stuff just happened. I entered the European Championships in Ireland in 2005, aged 20, and won with 474 yards. That's where it all started for me as I got sponsorship deals and opportunities off the back of it. Then I won the world title when I was 25 so I stuck with it and it's been pretty busy ever since. It's hardly a nine-to-five, but it's all I've known. I worked at a driving range and did bits as a personal trainer after I left school. My dad was a window cleaner so I had a round with him, too. I'd do that in the morning and play golf with him in the afternoon."

His late father, Dan, is never far from Miller's mind. "He was a massive influence," adds Miller. "He was golf mad, always at the club, playing five days a week. I know he'd be so proud of what I'm doing." Dan was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour at the start of 2009 and died 18 months later, just a few weeks before his son





You get through a lot of steak and eggs when you need to consume 6,000 calories a day.



Good job he likes his food.



"Power means nothing unless you hit it out of the middle of the clubface."

'McILROY HAS GONE FROM THAT LITTLE KID TO A PROPER FIT, LEAN GUY LIFTING HEAVY WEIGHTS FOR HIS SIZE. AND HE'S KILLING IT OUT THERE'

lifted the world title. "It's my big regret that he didn't see me win it," says Miller. "He was only 62 and up to then was as fit as anything, always at the gym with me. Seeing him deteriorate slowly was awful. His death spurred me on that year. I hadn't qualified, but I spoke to Lee (Cox, his coach) who encouraged me to go to Vegas. They do a last chance qualifier two days before the event which I went to and I ended up winning the whole thing. It was a real fairytale."

9.45am 'I can bench press 200kg'

He grabs his holdall from the boot, leads us up the stairs and into a narrow corridor before we enter his gym. It might not be much to look at, but it is little wonder Miller calls this his "home from home". Weights are lined

up in racks on the walls, with countless benches and apparatus filling the floor. Miller is instantly the centre of attention, laughing and joking with the staff and one or two regulars. "I've been coming here since I was 15," he says. "Some of the things that go on are hilarious. They should make it into a reality TV show!"

Leader of the cast is manager of 20 years, Gordon, who remembers when Joe first walked in. "He was very quiet, didn't let on about much. He told me what he wanted to achieve and he meant it. He's always gone for it. I'm proud of him."

After a quick warm-up, Miller heads to the far corner of the room and starts putting weight after weight on the end of a bar. "We'll go for it today," he says with a smile. "I want to look good in the magazine!" He tells me he can deadlift 270kg (about the same weight as four grown men), squat lift 270 and bench press 200.

Miller spends three hours here every day, changing his routine depending on how he feels. "I train instinctively," he explains. "I don't ever do the same thing two days in a row, it depends how I feel as to whether it's light or heavy, fitness or power. But whatever it is I give it everything, I train hard. Today is going to be heavy, legs and

Joe's gym routine

- **Monday** Pushing: Chest and shoulders
- **Tuesday** Pulling: Back and biceps
- **Wednesday** Cardio: Ropes, general fitness
- **Thursday** Legs and abdominals
- **Friday** Mixture of the above

Gym rules

- Three hours' work every day
- Do 30-40 minutes' cardio on exercise bike every day before breakfast
- Separate the body parts; no two days the same
- Do extra rope work and jumps to build explosive power before competition

back. I'll start with some squats, then some deadlifts, then bench press and dips. I'll finish upstairs on the ropes, building the strength in my arms and upper body."

12.45pm Six more eggs for lunch

"We've got a good day for it now," says Miller as we emerge into bright sunshine. "As long as there's no wind, that's my biggest enemy!" As we make our way to nearby Bocket Hall golf club, I wonder what Miller makes of the current penchant for bulking up among the game's household names. "I think it's great," he says. "McIlroy has gone from that little kid to a proper fit, lean guy lifting heavy weights for his size and he's killing it out there. Stenson and Westwood are the same, they're all at it."

Miller also dismissed those who criticised Tiger for bulking up and fear Rory is falling into the same trap. "It's not about too much or too little, it's about finding your natural size," he explains. "Everyone is different. Look at Gary Player: I did a three-day event with him in 2011 and at the end of each day we'd hit the gym together. He had 60 and 70 kilogram

dumbbells on his chest doing sit-ups at the age of 75! Then he'd get on the treadmill and crank it up to the max and run on it flat-out for a couple of minutes. It was unbelievable!"

Player has kept in touch and is one of Miller's many Tour supporters. "We had a long drive competition at that event, his driver against my putter. He hit it about 250 yards and I absolutely nailed one about 280! I felt a bit bad doing that to a legend, but he loved it. Things like that stay with you forever. All the Tour guys love to see what I do because they appreciate what it takes to hit a ball that far. Gary told me that eventually there will be guys on Tour who look like me. I think he's right."

Miller orders lunch and the waiter notes down "crispy bacon and six eggs" without so much as a flicker. It's clearly a routine request. We've been joined by Miller's coach, Lee Cox, who first met Joe aged 16. "He used to work at the driving range where I was based," explains Cox. "I didn't even know he played golf. Then one of the guys came in and told me Joe was hitting it a long way. You always take that with a pinch of salt, but he was a bit different to what I'd seen before! His dad asked me to help, but I knew nothing about long driving. ■

The Power Issue

Miller and his coach Lee Cox work on technique more than power.



"We tried different techniques from previous long drivers. It was trial and error because no one really teaches this stuff, there's no body of work to refer to. The only two guys we work with are in Hawaii and Salt Lake City and they don't agree with each other!"

They might be left to figure it out for themselves, but it is a relationship that works perfectly. "He's great to work with, we're mates," says Cox. "He's dedicated and takes it seriously. He works so hard at his game and swings it really well, much better than people give him credit for. It's good enough to be plus three or four."

2pm Warms up with a 330-yarder

We head out to the golf course and after a few languid practice swings, Miller unleashes. I've been waiting to see him in full swing all day and am not disappointed. Using his regular driver (six degrees of loft), Miller hits one that stays airborne for around 10 seconds before landing right in the middle of the fairway, comfortably out past 330 yards. "That's about 60 per cent," says Miller, who has won his last 14 European events over a two-year period. "I'll go to Lee and hit balls four

Joe's driving numbers (PGA Tour in brackets)

- **Clubhead speed:** 150mph (113mph)
- **Ball speed:** 225mph (167mph)
- **Launch angle:** 15 degrees (10.9 degrees)
- **Angle of attack:** 10 degrees (-1.3 degrees)
- **Smash factor:** 1.50 (1.48)
- **Spin:** 1,600rpm (2,686rpm)
- **Hang time:** 10 secs (6.8 secs)


BROCKET HALL
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'IF YOU WANT TO HIT IT FURTHER YOU HAVE TO START BY FINDING THE MIDDLE OF THE CLUBFACE'

or five days a week for a couple of hours at a time, but I won't hit too many full drivers, probably only around 25."

"Technique is everything," adds Cox. "He came back after Christmas not swinging it well so we're just working on delivering the face square and finding a nice flight again. Most of our early lessons were actually with an iron, keeping it on plane. At the start he was swinging it 130mph, but with the biggest hook around. Now he's up at 150, but the accuracy is there too. "If you want to hit it

further you have to start by finding the middle of the clubface."

"A lot of it is genetic," adds Miller. "If I stopped going to the gym I could still swing at 135mph, but finding the extra 15mph to win comes from the gym work. If I stopped seeing Lee I could still hit it far, but I'd struggle to combine that with accuracy and that's where I have a massive advantage."

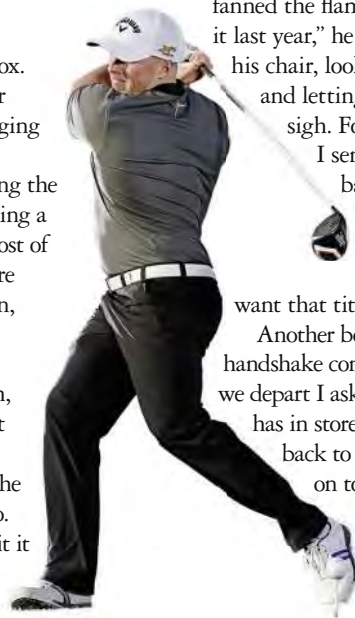
In competitions, Miller and his rivals get six attempts to find a grid about 50 yards wide. "Originally we planned to get a safe one in and then crank it up," explains Cox as his student continues to bludgeon away beside us. "But he's got so good in the last few years that I don't worry about him missing the grid any more. He knows that at worst he'll get three or four in. That's a massive confidence boost and a big advantage."

4.30pm Analysing the day's work

"We're getting there," is Cox's analysis of today's lesson and as we sit down to look back on the day's events over a cup of tea (green for Miller), I wonder what more teacher and student can hope to find. "People think long drivers just smash it anywhere, but it's a science," says Cox. "We're trying to find those optimum numbers for his swing all the time. The percentages are so small that you keep pushing the boundaries. One or two mph extra clubhead speed equates to five or six mph ball speed and 10 yards' distance. I've just sent his swing to be analysed by a biomechanics expert in America to try and give us that."

"I never switch off from it," admits Miller. "I can't. It's my life and I love it." This is a burning obsession and recent disappointments at the World Championship have clearly only fanned the flames. "I should have won it last year," he mulls, leaning back in his chair, looking up to the ceiling and letting out an enormous sigh. For the first time all day I sense that he is holding back. "I've been in the top three in four of the last five years and that magnifies it. I want that title back."

Another bone-shuddering handshake concludes the day and as we depart I ask Miller what tomorrow has in store. "Back to the gym, back to the golf course, back on top form," he says. "It's a big year ahead." We'll be watching closely.



A TO Z OF DISTANCE

Get longer, stronger and straighter with advice from long driving champions, equipment experts, Tour players and top coaches

WORDS ROB MCGARR, JOEL TADMAN, JOE DOWNES, KEVIN BROWN, STUART HOOD, DUNCAN LENNARD
PICTURES HOWARD BOYLAN, ANGUS MURRAY, BOB ATKINS, GETTY IMAGES



Power has always been important in golf. You need it to impress your mates and intimidate your opponents. You need it to turn par 5s into birdie opportunities. Without it, long par 4s can fill you with dread. You don't need to be the longest hitter in the field to win a competition, but the game becomes a lot easier if you don't have to hit a 3-wood into every green.

The traditional standpoint was that distance and power were just for the ego, while your short game and putting were the key factors in determining your scores. But groundbreaking research from PGA Tour professor Mark Broadie cast new light on the debate, revealing that the only ones convinced power isn't important are the ones who don't have it.

We now know how important power is – the long game is by far the biggest factor in your score – which is why we've sourced the world's leading experts to help you hit it further, without sacrificing accuracy.

By the end of this A-Z, you'll know exactly what you need to do with your set-up, swing, mentality, equipment, warm-up, and even your breakfast, in order to hit it further than ever before.

Power on!

A is for Adjustability

You could add 20+ yards to your drives by tweaking your weights

Driver adjustability now takes more forms than ever before. We've got Gravity Cores, Flip-Zones and Flight Pods all designed to fine tune launch, spin and shot shape, not to mention the loft, clubface and lie angle tweaks you can make via the hosel.

Eight of 18 driver models in this month's big test (see page 56) have some sort of sole weight adjustability, while all but one (TaylorMade AeroBurner) features an adjustable hosel. Changing the sole weights, both the position and weight of them, affects launch, spin and draw/fade bias. But does it all really work for average golfers with inconsistent swings?

During our driver test, we played around with the sliding weights on the new TaylorMade R15 driver. We asked resident pro James Ridyard to recreate a typical slicer's swing – 95mph clubhead speed, 10° out-to-in path and an open clubface – first with the driver set in neutral, and then set

with a draw bias. The results (below) reveal that you can gain 21 yards of carry, without changing your swing, simply by adjusting your driver.

The TG verdict

"Putting the weights in the heel makes this area heavier than the toe, allowing the toe to accelerate faster past the heel and close the clubface more through impact," Ridyard explains.

"I found it closed the clubface more quickly. It won't necessarily make you draw the ball if you normally hit a slice, but it will certainly reduce the curve, and give you more distance.

"By not having the face as open to the path, you reduce the spin and launch angle, which helps project the ball further forwards. It works."

With an adjustment that takes seconds, your driver may be able to help you hit it further and straighter – so it's definitely worth finding the right configuration for you.

Same swing, different results



NEUTRAL SETTING

Centralising the weights boosts distance – if your swing is perfect.

Club speed	96mph
Ball speed	132mph
Smash factor	1.37
Carry	192 yards
Spin	4,952rpm

DRAW BIAS

Placing both weights in the heel makes the toe travel faster.

Club speed	96mph
Ball speed	134mph
Smash factor	1.40
Carry	213 yards
Spin	3,037rpm

B is for Bubba

Learn from the Tour's biggest hitter

Bubba Watson has been the biggest hitter on the PGA Tour twice in the last three years, including last year when he topped the rankings with an astonishing 314.3-yard average. His 360-yard drives helped tame Augusta on his way to a second Green Jacket last year, and make him a hot favourite to repeat the feat this year. We spoke to him about his power moves and he gave us these power pointers:

■ **Hover the club:** Grounding the club can cause you to tense your body slightly and snatch the club away with your hands. For me, hovering it keeps your tension level constant and helps you start the club back with good rhythm.

■ **Flare your lead foot:** When Tiger wants to really pound a drive, he fans his left foot out at about a 45-degree angle. That almost forces him to clear his hips and lower body faster through the swing, his belly button facing left of the target at the finish. It allows him to generate tremendous power. I've copied that move from Tiger, and it works.

We also asked PGA National swing and coaching tutor Adrian Bishop to analyse the secrets behind "Bubba golf".

■ **Use your natural gifts** A lot of Bubba's power is down to assets that regular golfers can't gain because they are unique to him. He has really long arms and is ridiculously flexible. That outlandish flexibility builds an awful lot of power.

■ **Get into the ground** Now onto something you can copy. The ground is a massive power source and Bubba uses it very well. At the transition of his swing from backswing to downswing he digs into the ground brilliantly with his feet. This gives him a solid base to power off from. This in and out of the ground move isn't easy to master, but it provides a massive power boost.

■ **Imagination** This isn't a pure power tip, but one of the biggest things ordinary golfers can learn from Bubba is how overrated aim is. I regularly see club golfers wing it into the woods and then scratch their head as to how it happened, because their alignment stick tells them that their feet were pointing down the centre of the fairway.



Believe me, Bubba will never have worked on his alignment, because for him golf isn't about where his feet and hips are pointing. That is the shot he visualised, so that is the shot he is going to hit.

■ **Be creative** The primary thing golfers should learn from Bubba is the value of creativity. Bubba developed flair and imagination from a young age and now he is reaping the benefits through the number of different shots he can play.

■ **Lack of resistance** When he takes the club away, he doesn't attempt to resist the motion with his legs or hips and instead focuses on making as big and wide a turn as he possibly can. This lack of stability isn't great for control, but Bubba isn't bothered. He just wants to build as much power as he can by allowing everything to turn fully, so he can get as big a shoulder turn as possible.

■ Follow Adrian Bishop on twitter.com/aydthegolfer

Bubba's average driving distance

Year	Distance	Rank
2014	314.3	1
2013	303.7	5
2012	315.5	1
2011	314.9	2
2010	309.8	2
2009	311.4	2
2008	315.1	1
2007	315.2	1

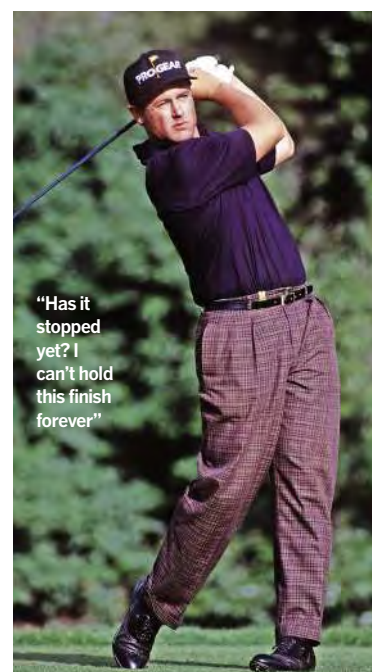
His longest drives of the year

Year	Event	Distance	Rank
2014	WGC-Bridgestone	424	1
2013	T'ment of Champs	396	24
2012	WGC-Bridgestone	442	2
2011	WGC-Bridgestone	415	3
2010	Sony Open	416	2

His Trackman driving numbers

Clubhead speed	123.7mph
Ball speed	183.48mph
Smash factor	1.483
Launch angle	10.06
Spin rate	2,636rpm
Distance to apex of ball flight	210.4
Height of apex	116' 7"
Hang time	6.6 sec
Carry distance	305 yards
Carry efficiency	2.467

'Hover the club at address to release the tension in your swing'



C is for **Carl Cooper**

Hit the longest drive in PGA Tour history

You might have thought the longest drive in PGA Tour history belonged to Bubba Watson, John Daly or Tiger Woods. But no, that prize belongs to little known journeyman named Carl Cooper.

Cooper played on the PGA Tour for four years in the early 1990s with little success. But he did manage to ink his name into history by hitting a 787-yard monster on the 444-yard 3rd hole at the 1992 Texas Open.

"I tried to cut the ball and I cut it too much," he told us. "It landed on a downhill cart path and kept bouncing and bouncing."

After running down the cart path for several hundred yards, the ball rolled onto a maintenance path and kept going and going and going. By the time it came to rest it was more than 300 yards past the green but, miraculously, still in bounds.

"I'd never have found the ball if it wasn't a tournament," he admits. "But because it was, a marshal found it and I had to play it. I had to hit 4-iron and 8-iron just to get back to the green." In the end, he walked off with a double-bogey six – and some very tired legs.

D

is for Draw

Denis Pugh on why you need one, and how to hit it

Is a draw that important?

Yes, it is. The most penetrative golf shot you can hit starts just slightly right of the target and draws back onto it.

Why does a draw go further than a fade?

Better brains than mine are trying to work this out! One theory says that a draw goes further than a fade is because a fade swing hits down with a steep angle of attack on the ball creating lots of backspin, while a draw swing creates less spin because it has a much shallower angle of attack.

How do you hit a draw?

It is all down to getting your swing path, angle of attack and swing direction correct. If you can combine those three factors, then you can hit a draw. This might sound easy on paper, but it is difficult to achieve for mid and high handicappers who tend to hit the ball out of the neck of the club and swing with slice numbers.

Should amateurs try to develop a draw?

It depends on whether your

current level matches your ambition? If it does, stick with what you have. If it doesn't, then you should try to make a change.

What is the best way of doing this?

The first thing you need to do is find out your swing numbers by getting a lesson on Trackman. It will reveal whether you are a double-digit drawer or fader. If you are, then you are currently hitting a slice or a hook, and this means you have a bad swing path and angle of attack and you are hitting the ball off-centre. If this is the case, then you need to address these problems before moving on and attempting to hit a draw.

And if we discover we are not a double-digit drawer or fader?

It depends on your willingness to take lessons and commit to practising. Every golfer in the world can improve his or her ball-striking by 10%, but it takes a lot of time and effort to do that. If you are willing to make that sacrifice, go out and get that draw. If you are not, stick with what you have.

E

is for Exercise

Unleash your untapped power with yogaforgolfers.com

1. Twisting Table pose

Place your right hand on the back of your head with your right elbow extended to the side. Inhale and twist your navel towards the ceiling as far as you can comfortably rotate without moving your hips. Exhale and tuck the right shoulder under the left shoulder, taking the back of the right shoulder toward the ground. Repeat five times on each side.

2. Oblique twists

Adopt the position shown (you can use a golf club or shoe bag instead of a Swiss ball) and roll your spine down towards the ground until you feel your core engage. Pause for a moment before using your core muscles to pull your body back to the start position. If this is too hard, simply hold this position for five breaths.

3. Warrior III pose

Stand with the feet hip width apart and a golf club in your right hand. Using the club to support you, step forwards with your left foot. Keep the left knee slightly bent and extend the right leg strongly behind you. Once you feel stable, bring the right foot off the ground. You should feel it in your glute and your body should resemble a see-saw.





F is for Fundamentals

Getting the basics right will help you hit it further

"A square strike, with weight and momentum driving forward straight through the ball, is always going to give you your most powerful shot," says top coach Gareth Johnston. "So use your address position to promote a neutral impact... and a decent weight shift." This is how to get your fundamentals right.

Pre-set weight shift

A powerful strike sees your weight move back during the takeaway. Prime this at address by dropping your trail shoulder slightly to give your upper body this "leant-away" look. This moves your head – your heaviest part – slightly away from the target, which adds weight on to your back foot. Feel a little extra pressure under the instep of your right foot.



Feel weight under your shoe laces

The ability to swing in balance is one of the keys to power – and that starts at address. Feel your feet pressuring the ground straight down through the laces and you'll find your most balanced position. Your stance should offer maximum resistance to anyone trying to push you off-balance.

Position the ball for a neutral strike

Play the ball under your left armpit. This ball position – at the low point of the swing's arc – sets up a solid neutral impact, where the club can attack the ball on both a level attack angle, and swinging straight down the line.

Insteps under shoulders

Your stance width affects how much power you generate – too wide and it'll restrict your coil; too narrow and you'll lose lower body resistance and stability. By placing your insteps under your shoulders, you'll create a stance width that gives you freedom to rotate, while offering a solid base.





Rest the grip in
the butt of your
fingers, not
your palm.

G is for Grip

Hit it further
by getting
your hold right

Lee Cox is the man long drive behemoth Joe Miller relies on for technical advice. "A good swing starts with a good grip," he says. "It is the biggest fault I see in amateurs and it destroys your chances of creating power."

"As you set your left hand (if you are right-handed) on the club, the grip should lie across the base of your fingers so that it is touching the joints. The only part of your palm that the grip should be in contact with is the hard part just under the fingers, NOT the fleshy part closer to your wrist. Look at your glove. If there is any marking on this fleshy area of the palm you are gripping the club incorrectly."

"This grip is fine for putting and chipping, as it limits the influence of the wrists, but that is not what we want in the long game as it means we cannot generate power or square the clubface."

"When your left forearm is parallel to the ground, the angle between wrist and forearm should be acute (less than 90 degrees). From here you have to uncock your wrist so the club points downwards and then swivel your wrist so the clubface is square at impact."

"The more acute the wrist angle and the quicker you deliver this sequence, the further you will hit the ball. However, it is impossible to do any of that if your grip is wrong."



is for Hank Kuehne

The American boasts the longest ever driving average in PGA Tour history

When Hank Kuehne was 11, he won a long-drive contest with a 275-yard drive. A year later, he retained the title with a blow of 289 yards. He won the 1998 US Amateur aged 22. And when he was 28, he burst onto the PGA Tour. That season, armed with a 140mph clubhead speed and 180mph ball speed, Kuehne usurped John Daly as the longest hitter in the game by averaging a still-record 321.4 yards from the tee.

"The other pros are amazed," smiles Kuehne. "When I'm hitting drivers on the range everything kind of stops and all the guys turn round to watch."

Kuehne wasn't accurate, sitting 187th in fairways hit, but he didn't care. "To be honest, I think that stat is kind of skewed, because I'm not necessarily trying to hit the fairway on a lot of holes," he shrugged. "If a hole is 340 or 350 yards, then I might knock it on the green or in a greenside bunker."

Not that 340 or 350 was the top of Kuehne's range. "I don't think I've ever seen anyone hit it that far," said Arnold Palmer after witnessing Kuehne boom a 370-plus drive, while 11-times PGA Tour winner Andy Bean tells this story about a practice round with Kuehne. "We were on

the 543-yard 6th at Bay Hill and Hank said, 'I bet I can knock it on'.

"We gave him three shots at it and bet him dinner he couldn't. There was a 10mph tailwind. His first effort came up a few feet short, but the second landed – eight feet on the green. I couldn't believe what I'd seen."

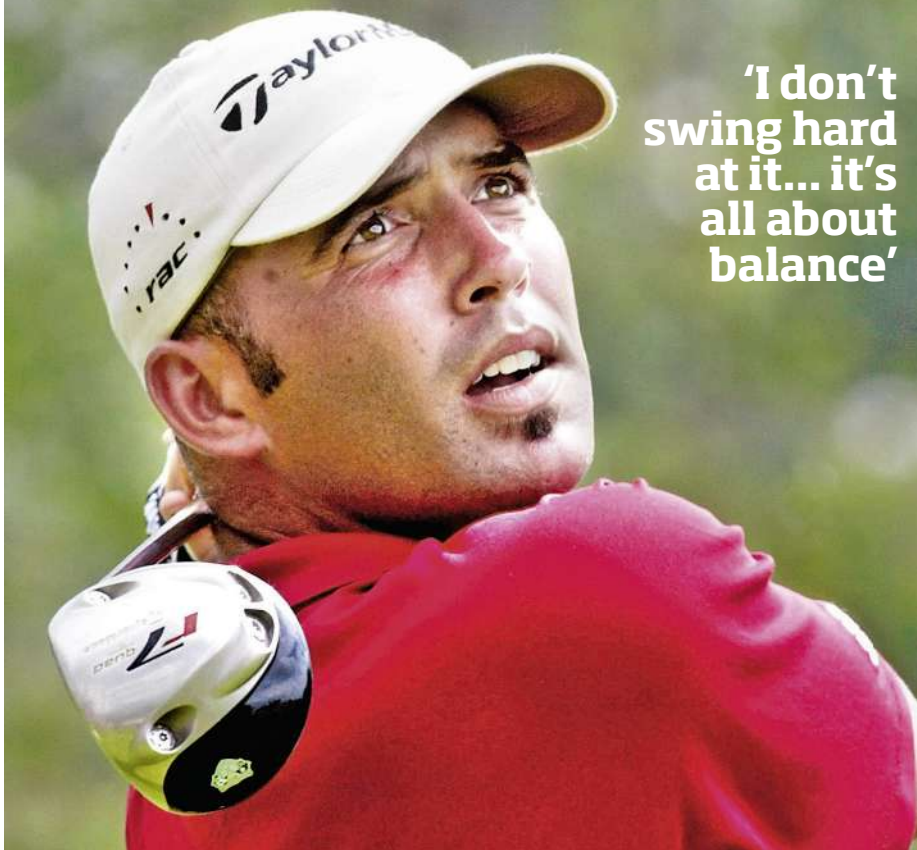
Butch Harmon once described Kuehne's swing as "a perfect picture of power and balance... effortless power rather than powerful effort."

A back injury kept Kuehne out of action for five years, and he struggled for form on his return. In 2012 and 2013, he played 17 times and missed 12 cuts. Nearing 40, he's now relying on sponsors' exemptions to get into events.

Whether or not he makes it back to the big time, Kuehne will always have 2003, a year when he was Mr Power.

Kuehne's five key swing thoughts

1. Balance and stability at address.
2. Takeaway should be low and slow.
3. Pause at the top to gather yourself.
4. Smooth and steady downswing.
5. Release clubhead through the ball.



**'I don't
swing hard
at it... it's
all about
balance'**



is for Innovation

In R&D labs around the world, a future breed of clubs are being developed. We look at the technology that could hit your bag soon

That spider-cum-spaceship at the bottom of the page is a prototype TaylorMade driver that reveals what clubs *could* look like – if you're willing to wait a while.

The "Mother of All Drivers" (MOAD) is pure flight of fancy given no R&A conforming rules. It features fins and aerofoils to correct any flaws during the downswing and guide the club along the correct path. Clever, eh?

"If you can't think outside the boundaries, then you can't properly design within them," says Benoit Vincent, Chief Technical Officer at TaylorMade. "Some of our best ideas about conforming clubs came when we were thinking about how to build these clubs of the future."

The MOAD might fall within the realms of fantasy, so we also asked revered club maker Tom Wishon to gaze into his crystal ball and tell us how the conforming clubs of the future could be different to what we've got today (right).

Slots, fins, springy faces... Have golf club manufacturers reached the limit of power-boosting technology, or are greater treats still ahead? We asked Tom Wishon, one of golf equipment's most influential figures, to give us his predictions for the future...

Innovations that WILL happen...

More slots Given the patents currently being filed by the major manufacturers, I'm certain there will be more and more slot technology.

Varied weight shafts I believe you will see some companies adding weight to different areas of the shaft in order to create new swing feels. This is a really interesting idea that has quite a lot of potential, but it's not strictly new – a few companies tried it in the 80s!

Smaller clubheads Big clubheads are fantastic for off-centre hits, but they don't actually boost the distance you can hit the ball off the sweetspot. Companies can design a face with the maximum legal rebound speed just as easily in a 250cc driver as they can in a 460cc driver. It's possible that a couple of top professionals might ask them to go this way. If this happens and the golfer has some success

with the smaller head, it's possible that companies will introduce smaller-headed "better player" driver models.

Innovations that SHOULD happen...

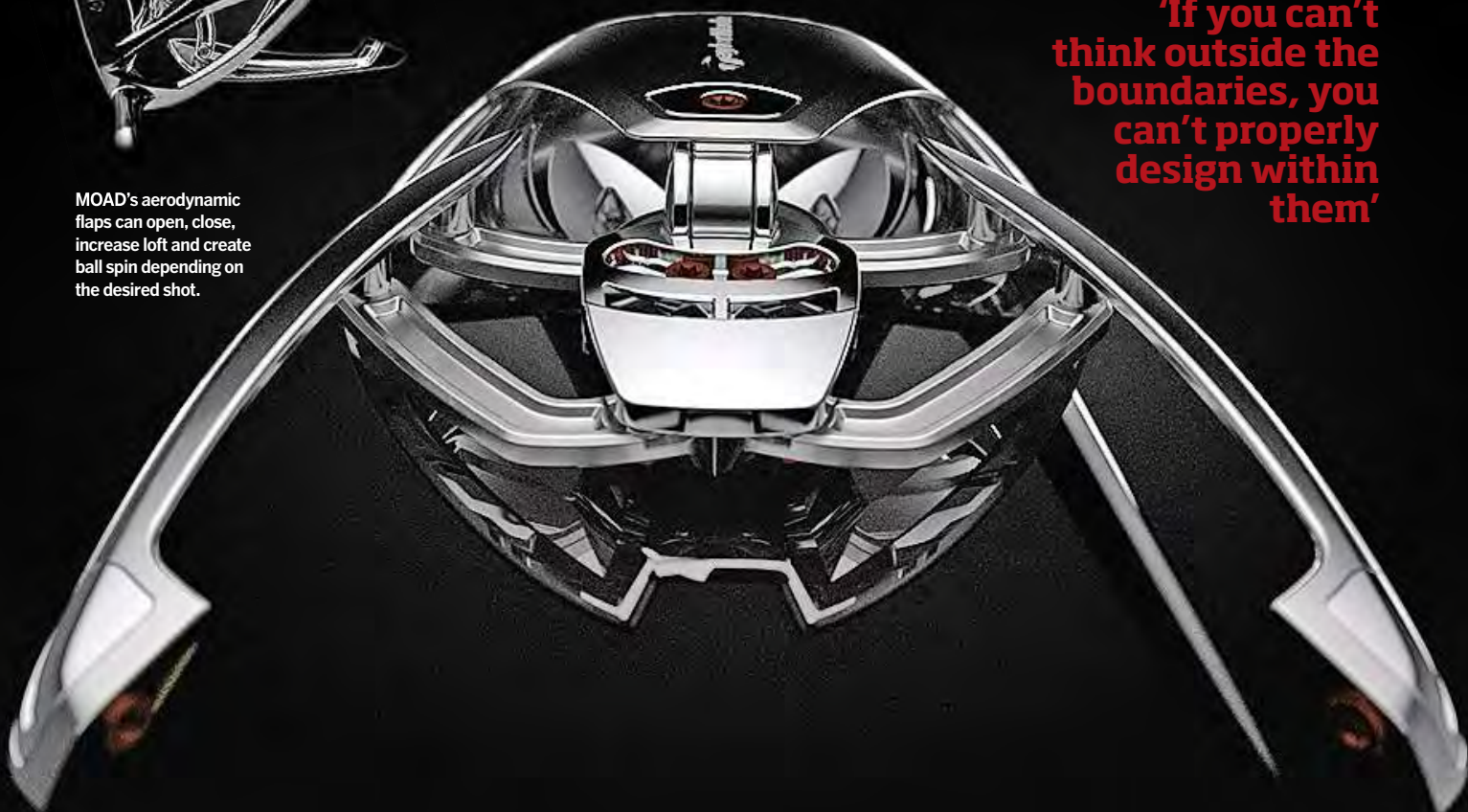
Widespread professional custom fitting

The biggest innovation that could boost regular golfers' power levels is a growth in professional custom fitting. I don't mean the kind of thing you currently get at a golf centre; I mean a Saville Row-style bespoke experience where a club-fitting expert analyses your swing, fits you for all 12 key specifications and designs a set of clubs that matches your swing so perfectly you hit the ball further than you ever have before and as far as your current swing will allow. This might sound like pie in the sky, but it is actually available right now.

Shorter shafts The majority of modern drivers come with 45.5-inch shafts. This is terrible for most golfers, who would be able to control the ball far more easily with a shorter shaft. In an ideal world, the major manufacturers would help mid and high handicappers by adding an easier-to-control 43 or 44-inch "game improver" driver to each line they bring out.



MOAD's aerodynamic flaps can open, close, increase loft and create ball spin depending on the desired shot.



'If you can't think outside the boundaries, you can't properly design within them'



is for Jeff Flagg

The 2014 RE/Max World Long Drive Champion shares his power secrets

Thirteen inches. It's an inch longer than your average ruler... and the distance by which Jeff Flagg won the 2014 RE/MAX World Long Drive Championship. The former minor league baseball player hit a 365-yard, 20-inch drive in the final. His opponent knocked his ball 365 yards, seven inches. Flagg, 29, picked up a cheque for \$250,000 – and the title of the biggest hitter on the planet. We caught up with him to find out how he did it.

You only started competing two years ago, so to be world champ already is pretty impressive...

It is amazing and has completely changed my life, but, like all the top long drive guys, I still think I have some room for improvement. There are some mechanics in my golf swing that are not complete yet and I can definitely get stronger.

What have been your best swing stats so far? During the final qualifier for the world championship in Mesquite, my fastest clubhead speed was 147mph, my fastest ball speed was 217 or 218mph and my longest drive went 463 yards. That drive was fun. It was about 20mph downwind, so I just tried to hit it high and let it ride the wind.

And you think you can get faster?

I can. My goal is to do this by building an efficient golf swing. I say this, because, like most people, my really good drives come through



timing rather than swinging as hard as I can.

So your swing thought isn't to 'hammer the ball into oblivion'?

Far from it. My aim is to try and put the same swing on the ball that I put on my wedges and irons. I feel like if I can do this then everything will be connected and aligned, leading to effortless power.

Are you any good at "normal" golf?

I'm not dreadful, but I am not Tiger either. I played about six times all of last year and tend to card around 78 or 80. My goal for this year is to really improve my short game, because I want to become as good a golfer as I can be.

What's been the best reaction when someone has seen you hit the ball?

My friends persuaded me to come down to a club-fitting session and pretend I'd never hit a ball before. This rep had been watching old golfers swing it 80mph or 90mph, then I smacked one that was over 130mph. The noise was so loud he almost fell off his chair!

Flagg says keep your swing smooth to hit it longer.



is for Karl Woodward

This 65-year-old still owns the world record for carry distance

Karl Woodward is, according to the Guinness Book of Records, the longest driver in the world. In 1999, he hit a ball 408 yards, through the air. The distance is measured, under strict criteria, from the tee to where the ball pitches, not where it comes to rest. It's a record that has remained unbeaten for 15 years – and now Karl wants another crack with a radical new club that's been designed solely to go miles. We caught up with the Brit to find out what's going on.

When did you first realise that you had become a super-hitter?

I kind of discovered by accident. In 1991, I was hitting drivers at a festival in Wallasey and one went 395 yards. A golf geek in the crowd said we should measure it properly and submit it to Guinness World Records because the current record was 392 yards. He was right. I'd broken the world record.

Is it true Guinness changed the criteria for the world record soon after?

It did, but I had quite a big hand in the alterations. After I hit the 395-yard drive, a lot of fame-hungry Americans began hitting off towers with 55-inch drivers in a bid to beat my mark. I didn't feel this was a true reflection of sporting ability, so I suggested Guinness change the rules. The new criteria stated that the record now concerned longest carry distance and golfers had to use a normal club and ball on level ground. I set that record for the first time in 1993 and have bettered it several times since.

What is the current mark?

408 yards and 10 inches. I set that record back in 1999 live on Sky Sports and it nearly killed me. I was almost giving up through tiredness when I suddenly caught one sweetly. It landed right in the centre of a bunker that was just over 400 yards away in the centre of the grid. I've never been so pleased to drive it in a bunker in all my life.

What's your long driving secret?

Years ago, I slipped a disc in my neck. I was out of golf for three years, but when I came back I was suddenly able to swing much faster. The injury left me with no nerve response in my right arm and shoulder, so my brain can't tell my arm to slow down.

You're not built like most long drivers...

I am 11 stone soaking wet, so I am no Schwarzenegger, but I have always played a lot of racket sports and I have got very strong hands and forearms because of that. At the end of the day you have got to hang onto the thing.

You're still hitting it pretty long...

Yeah, about a year ago I was banned from a driving range. At the end of the range was a main road that goes from North Wales to Chester. I don't normally hit driver there, but I was goaded into trying someone else's. I only hit one, but I leathered it and it flew the net at the end of the range and hit a bus. It careered off the bus and ended up in a pub car park.

Does your distance help on the course?

At Crondon Park Golf & Country Club, the closing hole is an 840-yard par 6 with water in front of the green. I was 10 yards through the back in two. My second shot was driver off the deck. Half-a-mile in two shots.

Do you think your record will be broken?

I certainly hope so, because I am planning to break it! The way technology has changed in the last few years is incredible. The driver I am holding here is a prototype made by Bloodhound SSC, a group of British engineers aiming to break the land speed record but also design a record-breaking driver (they asked us to mask the design in this picture as they don't want people to see it yet). I'm hoping to hit the finished version over 500 yards next year.

Excuse us, did you say 500 yards?

It is substantially further than the current record, but the guys and I think it is achievable. If we threw a couple of million at the project, we could get it done in a couple of months, but they are self-funded and running in conjunction with the world speed record attempt, so it takes time.

Woodward isn't big, but he can give it a hell of a smack.



How to smack it 400 yards

Karl's tips for bigger hits

1: Ignore the ball

Give somebody 10 balls and tell them to hit them as far as they possibly can. Then take the balls away and tell them to swing the club as fast as they can. The average is 12mph faster without the ball there. My coach used to sit behind me saying 'there is no ball there' and eventually I believed it.

2: Lift off at impact

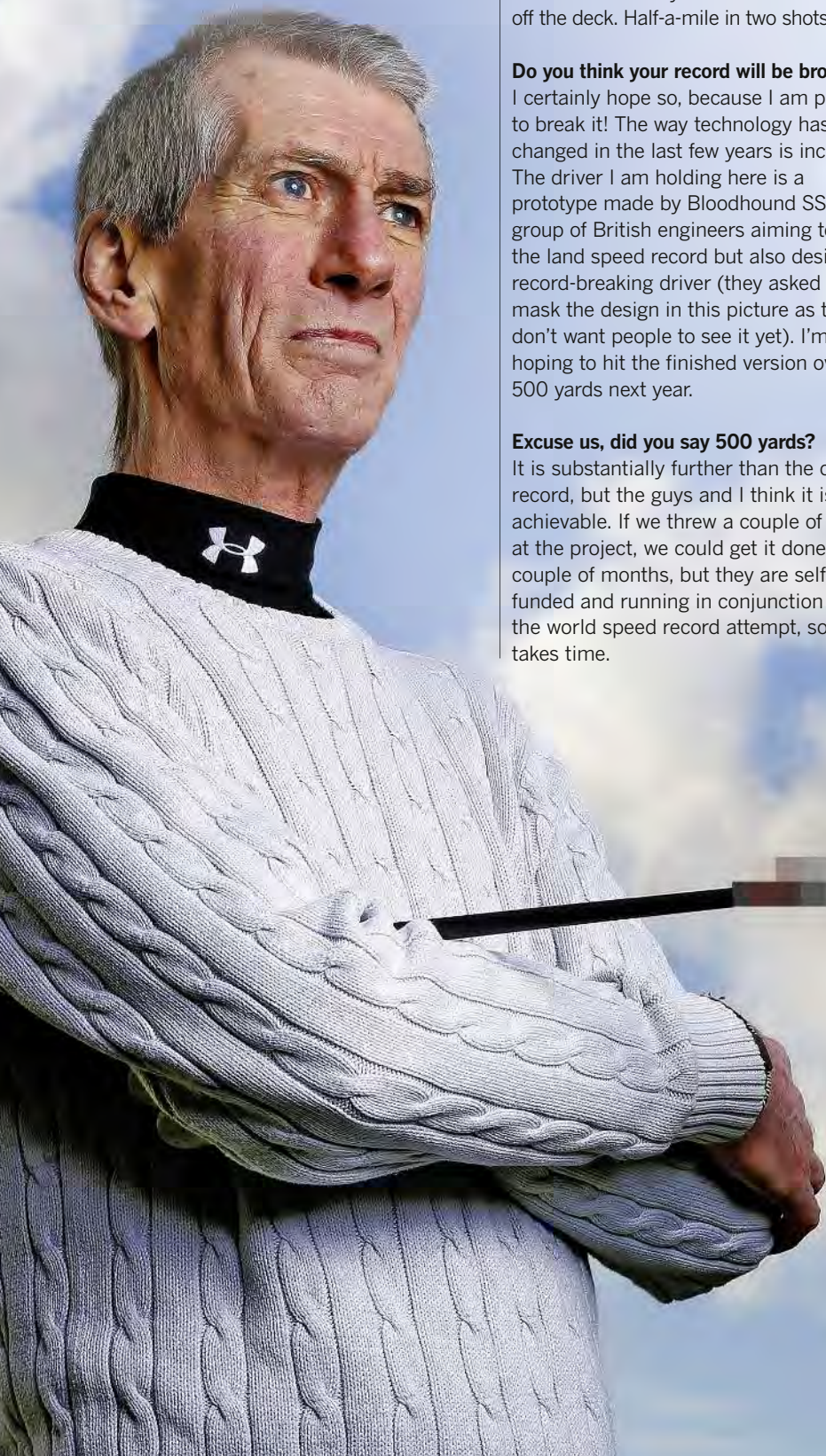
Like all really long drivers, I come up onto my tiptoes at impact. I am almost bolt upright at impact, and I'm convinced this adds speed. If you are going to try this, line your ball up with the heel of your club at address, as this will compensate for the amount you pull the club in prior to impact.

3: Go beyond parallel

Like John Daly, I go way beyond parallel at the top of my backswing. On a good day, I can see the clubhead out of my left eye. Then I know I am in a position to start my downswing.

4: Create as much lag as you can

Until a few years ago I had never heard of lag and releasing the club late. When I heard about it, I went back and looked at pictures of my swing. Sure enough, my hands arrived at the ball way before my clubhead. In some pictures my hands are there and the clubhead is still up by my right ear! I've always been able to drag the clubhead back to the ball.



M is for MPH

Speed equals distance

Ever wondered which tour pro has the fastest swing speed or exactly how speed equates to distance? The brains behind Trackman did, too. So they worked it out (below), while we've added each player's final 2014 position on the PGA Tour's distance ranking in brackets (where applicable).

European Ryder Cup team speeds

Rory McIlroy	121.6mph	(3)
Henrik Stenson	120.4mph	(64)
Sergio Garcia	119.8mph	(57)
Jamie Donaldson	117.8mph	(-)
Victor Dubuisson	117.8mph	(-)
Martin Kaymer	117.1mph	(50)
Stephen Gallacher	116.1mph	(-)
Lee Westwood	115.5mph	(71)
Justin Rose	114.7mph	(49)
Ian Poulter	112.0mph	(102)
Thomas Bjorn	110.7mph	(-)
Graeme McDowell	109.8mph	(165)

USA Ryder Cup team speeds

Bubba Watson	123.7mph	(1)
Rickie Fowler	117.9mph	(33)
Jimmy Walker	117.1mph	(19)
Keegan Bradley	116.9mph	(17)
Patrick Reed	115.9mph	(71)
Phil Mickelson	115.6mph	(70)
Hunter Mahan	112.2mph	(45)
Jordan Spieth	111.6mph	(89)
Webb Simpson	111.1mph	(98)
Jim Furyk	110.3mph	(155)
Matt Kuchar	108.9mph	(136)
Zach Johnson	107.7mph	(141)

What it all means

Trackman also calculated how swing speed equates to distance. Every additional mph gives you three yards of distance. The average male golfer's swing speed is 93.4mph; the average male tour pro's is 113mph, while the average for LPGA pro's is 94mph.

Clubhead speed	Av distance
75mph	167 yards
80mph	182 yards
85mph	197 yards
90mph	212 yards
95mph	226 yards
100mph	241 yards
105mph	256 yards
110mph	271 yards
115mph	286 yards

L is for Loft

Expert club maker Tom Wishon on why the ideal loft depends on your swing speed

Less loft doesn't always mean more distance. One of the biggest misconceptions in golf equipment is people thinking that the lower the loft on your driver, the further you will hit the ball. Drivers with low lofts might help the John Daly's of this world, but the rest of us mere mortals will actually get more distance with a higher loft.

Imagine you are using a garden hose and trying to get the water coming out of it to travel as far as possible. Now, suppose someone turns the water pressure down (which is equivalent to a slower swing speed). The spray will immediately lose distance. So what do you do to get some of that distance back? You raise the angle of the nozzle. It's the same thing with the driver. If you have a very fast swing speed (ie the hose is on full blast), you can get maximum distance with a lower loft. But if you have a slower swing speed, you need more loft to get maximum distance. What you cannot do is pair a slow swing speed with a low-lofted driver. That is equivalent to lowering the

water pressure and lowering the nozzle angle, and then wondering why you're getting wet feet.

Get the right loft for your swing speed.

The average male golfer swings their driver at about 90mph (see mph, right). With a nine-degree driver, their carry distance will only be around 206 yards. With a 13-degree driver, carry distance will be around 213 yards, which could equal a total distance gain of well over 10 yards. To get the most out of the nine-degree driver so many people are keen to purchase, you'd need to be swinging it over 100mph, while still maintaining control.



is for Nicolas Colsaerts

The Belgian Bomber owns the record for the European Tour's longest driver ever... and this is how he did it

Back in September, Nicolas Colsaerts set a new record for the longest drive ever on the European Tour. He bunted one down the 18th at Celtic Manor which came to rest 447 yards away from the tee... leaving him a gap wedge second into the 613-yard par 5. He says: "I think it's timing. I'm always amazed when I look at some guys. They're swinging so fast, with furious action. But if you look at me, it looks very relaxed, a lot smoother. I realised I shouldn't watch other long hitters because they're going to hurt my rhythm." To get more insight into how the Belgian Bomber brutalises courses, we spoke to his coach, Michel Vanmeerbeek.

Long-term planning

Distance is not something you can add to your game late in your career. It is something that needs to be organised right from the start. If you start by developing a flowing technique that allows you to hit it long, then you can add in control at a later date. If you start with a technique that is based around control, then it is very difficult to suddenly add extra yards. People debate whether it is a game of control or of distance, I always consider it a game of distance.

Give your swing freedom

A lot of people say his swing looks "really free" when they see it for the first time and I can see why. Nicolas looks like he plays with a lot of freedom, because he allows the club to travel pretty much uncontrolled to the top of the

backswing. This is intentional. The only things I want him to think about are using his arms as a power source and his legs for support.

Grip strength

If you have a neutral grip, then it is very hard to be a long hitter, because it is very hard to develop the lag you need on the downswing. Because of this, Nicolas has adopted what I would call a strong grip.

A wide arc

To load the power you need to drive the ball 300-plus yards you need to combine a wide arc with a strong central axis. Nicolas does this by making as wide a takeaway as he can while keeping his body very centred. This move builds a lot of distance between the body and the clubhead in the backswing, allowing Nicolas to create a lot of stored power without looking like he's putting in much effort.

Get more lag

I have never been a big believer in developing power via body or shoulder turns. For me, the greater the difference between the angle of the club and your left arm, the more lag you create. And the more lag you create the more potential power you have. Nicolas creates lots of lag in his swing and this means he is able to generate an incredible amount of power that allows him to really make the club snap when he releases it at the bottom of his arc.



'If you have a neutral grip, it is very hard to be a long hitter'

O is for Optimum conditions

How much further will your ball go on a sunny day?

We all know that your ball doesn't go as far on a freezing cold winter morning as it does in the middle of summer, but how much difference do the conditions actually make? Former USGA technical director Frank Thomas has said the difference is about two yards of carry for every five degrees (celsius) change in temperature. Going by Thomas' maths, a drive that carries 250 yards on a 25-degree summer day will only carry 240 yards on a five-degree winter morning.

Dean Snell, who's designed balls for Titleist and TaylorMade, told us: "When the ball gets colder, it can lose a few miles per hour in speed, which can mean a loss of distance," he said. "The optimum temperature range is 21 to 32 degrees. At five-degree temps the ball can slow down and be shorter by five to 10 yards." Keeping your ball warm on cold days can help, so don't tee it up any sooner than necessary, and don't leave your bag in your boot on cold nights before a round...

P is for Physical Conditioning

Why your waist size affects the length of your drive

A study of 16 college golfers published in The Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research found that after training three times a week for 11 weeks all of them showed improved strength, power, flexibility and clubhead speed.

Oh, and just in case you're currently muttering 'well, they're young college golfers', a second piece of research published in the same journal focused on males aged 35 to 58 discovered that each and every one of them saw significant increases in his club speed, ball speed, carry distance and total distance after working out three times a week for eight weeks. If you want to really rip it, you've got to lift it.



Q is for Quality of Strike

It's no use swinging it hard if you can't hit the ball out of the middle

How much power do you waste if you miss the sweetspot? Why do your mates swing half as hard as you, but hit it twice as far? It's all about the quality of your strike, as top swing instructor and Trackman expert Chris Moss reveals...

How much do off-centre hits waste clubhead speed?

It depends which side you miss on. Trackman data has revealed that the toe travels around 5% quicker than the centre of the club and 10% faster than the heel of the club.

So does that mean shots hit off the toe actually travel further than ones hit off the sweetspot?

Yes and no. While the vast majority of shots hit off the toe of the club will go nowhere near the same distance as one hit off the sweetspot, you can hit an extra-long bomb if you catch the ball about half-an-inch high and to the right of the sweetspot.

Why is that?

It is all to do with the speed, launch angle and spin rate, but it is

probably easiest to explain with actual statistics. I recently put together a video demonstrating the difference between a heeled shot, a sweetspot shot and a hot spot shot. The heeled shot had a clubhead speed of 114.6mph, a ball speed of 167.2mph, a spin rate of 4,162 and a total distance of 259 yards. The sweetspot shot had a clubhead speed of 115.2mph, a ball speed of 172.5mph, a spin rate of 2,697 and a total distance of 302.4mph. And the hot spot shot had a clubhead speed of 117.2mph, a ball speed of 174.8mph, a spin rate of 2,599 and a total distance of 308.4mph.

So why does everyone go on about the sweetspot?

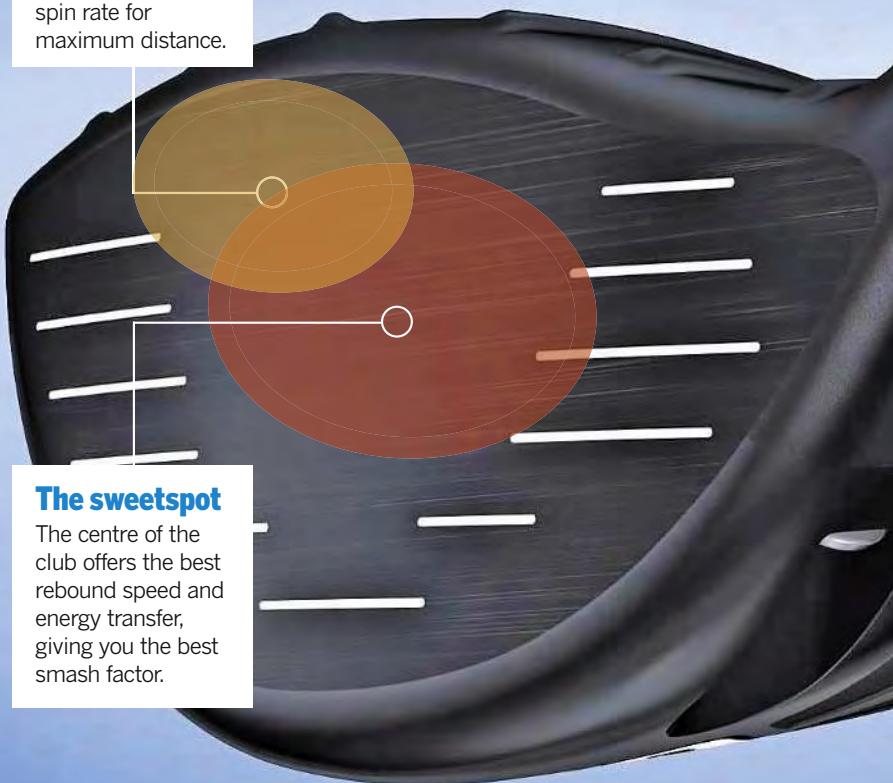
Consistency. In terms of the numbers, the sweetspot gives you best set of results as it is the place on the face that offers the best rebound speed and energy transfer (known as coefficient of restitution). These factors mean the sweetspot gives you the highest ball speed in relation to your swing speed.

The hotspot

Travels around 5% faster than the centre of the club and offers lower spin rate for maximum distance.

The sweetspot

The centre of the club offers the best rebound speed and energy transfer, giving you the best smash factor.



'Boost your distance by shallowing attack angle'

So should we work on trying to hit the ball in the sweetspot or the toe?

Neither. If an amateur golfer wants to hit the ball further, they should work on increasing their launch angle and decreasing the amount of spin they put on the ball.

How do you do this?

It is all about shallowing the swing's angle of attack. Most amateur golfers swing down and to the left with their drivers. This means they are losing speed, because they are hitting the ball with the heel, and imparting lots of spin on the ball, because they are delivering a glancing blow.

So fixing this means more distance?

Yes. Any golfer who can get his or her angle of attack close to 0° will achieve a better quality of strike and this will lead to a better energy transfer and distance gains of up to 20 yards.

■ Chris Moss is based at Patchesham Park Golf Centre in Surrey. To book a lesson visit chrismoss.golf.co.uk



R

is for Rotation

Tour coach Jonathan Wallett helps turn your body into a powerful coil

Some golfers at your club will have fast and flashy swings, but still be relatively short hitters – and that is because they are not laying the foundations. Building forces allows you to deliver them in the form of clubhead speed later on and that process starts with the backswing. This sometimes gets overlooked when creating power as you are moving the clubhead away from the ball, but this is where our “power potential” comes from. The key is not how far back you can go (listen to your body and don't force it), but turning your upper body while keeping your right side strong. This will create force through the ground in the right foot and leg which is vital later on in the swing.



Key feeling

Imagine you are pushing the spikes of your right shoe into the ground. This will help you maintain a sturdy right side and give you more power.



All right Turn your right foot in slightly and you should feel an increase in resistance and torque through your right side. This is the feeling that we are looking for during the backswing.



Load up Focus on driving your left knee in on the way back while keeping your right side strong, with the sturdy right hip in a similar position to address. This is called loading up the right side.

S is for Shafts (long, short, light, heavy...)

It's the engine of the club – but which is best for your game?

We posed some hard-hitting shaft questions to Jason MacNiven, a club fitter with over 20 years experience at Golf Principles (www.golfprinciples.co.uk).

Does a longer shaft equal more distance?

Longer and lighter does not necessarily mean more yards. Centre of strike trumps all. If you miss the centre of the club by as little as 2mm you lose performance. Therefore there will be a point where you miss the centre because the shaft is too long. Recently, shaft lengths have reduced as designers realise that a centre hit is king. A great way to test this is to hit a shaft 1" short, standard length and plus 1" and look at the dispersion pattern compared to distance and see which is the best performer.

Is it worth getting an aftermarket shaft?

If you have maxed out the smash factor, launch and spin with the stock shaft then there's no need. But if you are missing any of those numbers then explore the upgrade options; it might mean lighter, heavier, lower torque, higher launching or lower launching.

What stiffness suits my swing speed?

Swing speed is a poor measure of shaft flex; it's more where and how you load the shaft. Take two golfers with the same clubhead speed, one with a short punchy swing, the other long and loose. Do they have the same shaft because of their club speed? Probably not, as the load on the shaft is heavier with the short, punchy swing. That golfer should be using a heavier, stronger shaft for more control.

What else can my shaft do to help me hit better drives?

There's more to a shaft than stiffness and length. I'd also look at what the tip of the shaft is doing during impact. Some players need the tip to stay strong to keep the head square through contact, while others need more flex to get the head square. An expert will fit you for the right weight, tip flex, and balance point, along with the correct loft – resulting in better distance and dispersion.

A launch monitor will tell you which shaft gives you the best launch conditions.

T is for Transition

One key move at the top can make all the difference

Efficient power is defined as power generated in such a way that it is repeatable and consistent, creating a solid strike with good flight control. Lots of golfers occasionally flush it a long way, but their swing looks like someone trying to control a stray hosepipe and they spend most of their time in the bushes looking for lost balls! I see lots of amateurs who, despite having fairly solid takeaways, lose power by making mistakes as they start the downswing. This transition should be initiated by planting your left foot hard into the ground, so you feel that your left hip starts to pull away from the right knee. This is how to do it.

Key feeling

My left arm and the shaft form an "L" shape. As you approach impact, this will help you hold the flex in the shaft for as long as possible, creating maximum power.





Push off A sprinter pushes into the blocks with the front of the foot while their heel is a little in the air to give them that spring-like effect when the gun goes. The same concept applies to golf footwork. Ben Hogan had an extra spike in the front of his right shoe to increase his ability to create ground force.



Stretch out: Imagine you have a piece of elastic or string attached to your right knee and left hip. Set it loose and try to stretch it tight by pushing the front of your right foot down and driving the left hip upwards. This is a key power move and helps you clear your left side fully after impact.

'You can have the perfect takeaway and waste it all in transition'



is for Upgrade

What's changed since the last time you bought a driver?

The average golfer buys a new driver every five years. "Five years is a long time in club research and development," says Jason Howarth, Category Director of TaylorMade. "Five years ago we didn't know that a 17° launch with 1700rpm spin rate gives the greatest distances for the vast majority of golfers. Since discovering this, we've gone on to make extremely successful models like the SLDR and R15, which feature a lower and

more forward centre of gravity to create optimum launch angle and spin rates for the majority of golfers. It has been an incredible half-decade and we expect the technological breakthroughs to continue."

Hotter faces, more adjustability than ever, shaft upgrades and aerodynamic improvements all mean that today's drivers could well out-perform the one in your bag. But we know not everyone can afford a brand new club, which is why...



is for Value

If you can't stretch to a brand new club, all six of these have won a TG test gold

While technology improves each year, it doesn't mean a driver that's a few years old is suddenly useless. You've only got to look at the likes of Lee Westwood using three-year-old Ping i25 irons and Louis Oosthuizen's Ping G5 woods to realise that if the world's best are happy using clubs that aren't the latest releases, you could do the same. These previous TG test winners are second-hand gems on Golfbidder.co.uk



**2008
TaylorMade r7**
2008 £279, NOW £42



**2009 Ping
Rapture V2**
2009 £310, NOW £78



**2010
Ping G15**
2010 £249, NOW £72



**2012
Ping G20**
2012 £255, NOW £99



**2013 TaylorMade
RBZ Stage II**
2013 £249, NOW £99



**2014 TaylorMade
SLDR**
2014 £349, NOW £136



is for Warm-up

Channel your inner Miguel by stretching

"We want to prepare the body as best we can, so before our players go to the range, we take 20-30 minutes to get the body right," reveals Justin Rose's performance coach Justin Buckthorp (360healthperformance.com). Boffins at Stephen F Austin State University in Texas found that an active dynamic warm-up with golf clubs led to significant increases in accuracy and ball-striking. PGA Tour fitness consultant Kelly Blackburn (kellyblackburn.com) has created an active dynamic warm up you can do in five minutes. Each exercise requires 10-15 repetitions on each side without stopping.

1: Dynamic hamstring stretch

Stand with your clubface towards you and hand atop the club. Step back with one foot and fix both feet firmly on the ground. Engage the hamstring by bending the knee of the back leg, raising the toe of the front foot and slowly sitting back as though you were sitting in a chair. Slowly return to the start position and repeat.

2: Dynamic torso rotation stretch

Hook your elbows behind the club so it rests against your lower back. Get into your address position and slowly rotate to the top of your backswing. Without hesitation return to address and proceed to the top of your followthrough.

3: Dynamic lower back stretch

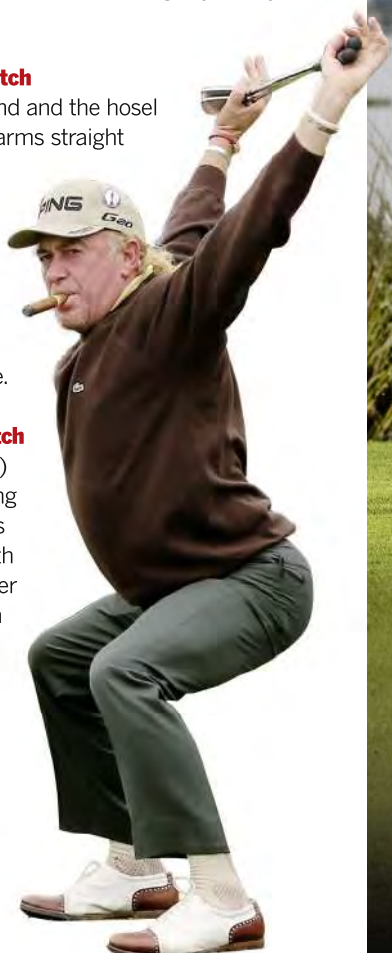
Hold an iron behind your knees, one hand on each end. Now stretch your lower back and hamstrings by slowly rounding your back.

4: Dynamic shoulder stretch

Hold the grip with one hand and the hosel with the other, keep your arms straight and raise your club to shoulder height. Now slowly lower your right hand towards your hip while bringing your left arm towards your right shoulder. Return to the start and repeat in reverse.

5: Dynamic adductor stretch

The inner thigh (adductor) is crucial to your golf swing because it helps your hips generate power. Stand with your feet just over shoulder width apart, your hand on top of your club and the clubface pointing towards you. Engage your adductor by bending your right knee and slowly leaning to your right side while lifting your left heel. Repeat on the other side.



is for X-Factor stretch

It's the key power move – and this is how you increase yours

X-Factor stretch refers to the difference between your hip and shoulder rotation as you start down. A powerful downswing begins with the hips briefly shifting laterally before rotating into and over your left or lead leg. Meanwhile, the shoulders retain their backswing rotation. This move increases the difference between hip and shoulder turns, cranking up the torque through your body that can be released powerfully through impact.

Backswing

To feel X-Factor stretch, stick a cane or old shaft against the outside of your lead foot. Make your regular backswing. Note the gap formed between your lead hip and the cane.



Starting down

Start down with the intention of shifting your lead hip as far as possible from your hands. Bunt the cane with your hip to reinforce this feeling. This move sets up the lateral hip shift and rotation that builds X-Factor stretch. It also sets the "kinematic sequence" – sport's famous power move – in chain.

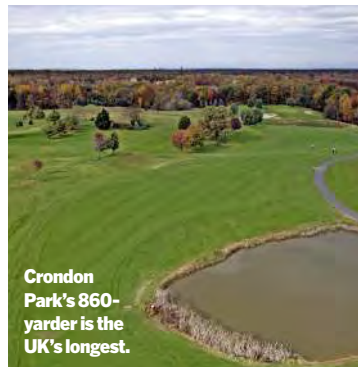




is for Yardage

Want to test your tee shots? Then head for the world's longest holes

Gunsan's par-7 3rd hole is just shy of 1,100 yards.



1: 1,097-yard par 7

Gunsan Country Club, South Korea

Nearly two-thirds-of-a-mile long and with water all the way down the left, this hole is the definition of a card-ruiner – pretty harsh, considering it's the 3rd. It's a par 7, but all bar the longest of hitters will be happy to walk away with single figures.

2: 964-yard par 7

Satsuki GC, Japan

Even if you escape that hole with your card intact, you'll face the world's only other par 7. The good news is that the hole is flat and relatively straight and a spokesman claims "though it's long, if you keep it in the fairway you can save par."

3: 878-yard par 6

St Andrews Hill, Rayong, Thailand

This ultra-demanding hole features two fairways divided by a lake, but neither of them could really be classed as a "shortcut". After playing an Asian Tour event there, US pro Gerry Norquist revealed he needed a driver, 4-iron, 3-wood and a pitching wedge to reach the green in four. "It's a tough hole and I've never seen anything like it before," he said.

4: 861-yard par 6

St Andrews Hill, Rayong, Thailand

What is it with these courses not being content to have one mammoth hole? You'll need four shots to make the green, and even then you'll find a putting surface that's huge, two-tiered, and virtually surrounded by water and sand. Terrific!

5: 860-yard par 6

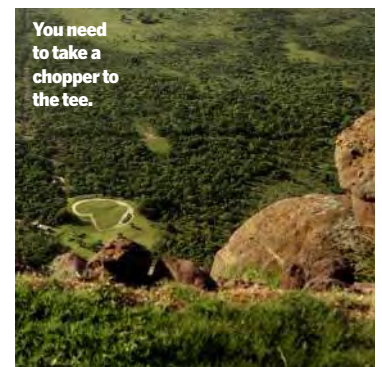
Crondon Park G&CC, Essex

The longest hole in the UK by a country mile isn't made any easier by the huge lake that will swallow up any second shot that drifts left – not easy considering the hole slopes that way.

Plus... the world's longest par 3

437 yards at Legend Golf & Safari Resort, Entabeni, South Africa

A 437-yard par 3 might sound impossible, but in your favour is the fact that the tee box is 1,410 feet above the hole (your £500 green fee includes a helicopter ride up there and back). Your ball will be in the air for nearly 30 seconds, during which time friendly spotters on the ground will try to keep track of it for you. Pádraig Harrington was the first person to ever make par here.



is for in the Zone

European Long Drive champ Joe Miller says power is all in the mind

"It starts from the moment I wake up," says former World Long Drive champion Joe Miller. "I do everything I can to make sure I'm in a good mood, as I find this gives me more energy than if I'm feeling grumpy. I'll eat a healthy breakfast and I always wear my black top for competitions; it's not really a superstition, but sticking to certain habits makes me feel like I'm fully prepared. Having won a lot of events, I know that if I do certain things, I'll come out on top. Stick to a routine that fills you with confidence."

Today's **Golfer FANTAS**

Sign up for free today to stand a chance of

Fantasy Golf is back for its fifth season and this one is set to be the biggest and best yet with some fantastic prizes to be won.

Last year nearly 10,000 of you signed up to play with Mark Rogers claiming overall victory by a record 218 points. The game will once again take in events from both the European and PGA Tours over an eight-month season that starts at the Masters and finishes at the DP World Tour Championship in November.

As well as the regular season, the Knockout Cup competition returns to add some extra spice for those at the top and a final shot at glory for the strugglers! We'll help you along the way with in-depth tournament previews on our website and regular game updates in the magazine. The rules are the same as previous seasons, but for first-time players and those of you needing a refresher, here's how it works.

HOW TO TAKE PART

Visit www.todaysgolfer.fantasyleague.com to register your team before the start of this year's Masters in April.

Every player is given a value and you must select a team of six players each week from a £15 million budget.

You can make unlimited changes up to the start of every game week so that your team is in perfect order for each event. You earn points based on each of your players' performances (detailed scoring information is available on the website).

The pros schedule their seasons around the bigger events and our game is no different.

The four Majors are worth triple points, while WGC events, the Players, BMW PGA, PGA Tour Championship and

DP World Tour Championship are worth double points.

The Knockout Cup will begin midway through the season, pitting you against another manager drawn at random with the highest scorer out of the two of you progressing to the next round. The last two standing will face off in the last week of the season.

Register your team or private league now, in time for the start of the competition.

Rory McIlroy

£7.5m

Adam Scott

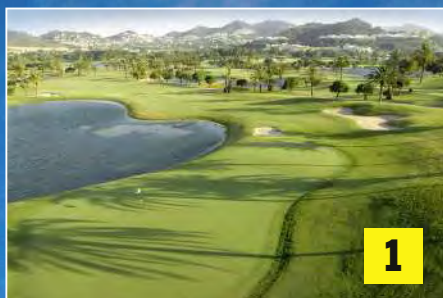
£5m

ENTER AT WWW.TODAYSGOLFER.FANTASYLEAGUE.COM

Y GOLF IS BACK!

winning holidays, clubs, shoes and balls

FANTASTIC PRIZES UP FOR GRABS



1ST PLACE: LA MANGA HOLIDAY

A five-night holiday for two at the world-famous La Manga Club in Murcia, south-east Spain, including five nights' bed and breakfast in the five-star hotel, three rounds of golf (to be taken on the North, South or West courses) and complimentary access to the spa, indoor pool and gym. Prize subject to availability and valid until June 30, 2016. lamangaclub.com



2ND PLACE: DONNAFUGATA HOLIDAY

A five-star luxury golf break for two at Donnafugata in Sicily, including four nights' B&B and two rounds of golf (until Dec 31, 2016). donnafugatagolfresort.com



3RD PLACE: THRACIAN CLIFFS HOLIDAY

A luxury break for two at Thracian Cliffs Golf & Beach Resort including two nights' B&B and two rounds of golf (until Dec 31, 2016). thraciancliffs.com

4TH PLACE: FAIRMONT ST ANDREWS BREAK

Two-night luxury Bed & Breakfast break for two at the five-star Fairmont St Andrews in Scotland including one round of golf on the Kittocks course and one round on the Torrance course (until Dec 22, 2016). standrewsbay.com

5TH PLACE: CANTERBURY BREAK

Shepherd Neame-sponsored two nights' stay for two people at the Miller's Arms, Canterbury, including rounds of golf at North Foreland, Littlestone and Boughton. golfinkent.co.uk

6TH & 7TH PLACES: ATLANTIC LINKS

A fourball over an Atlantic Links course of your choice. atlantic-links.co.uk

8TH PLACE: TWO-NIGHT BREAK

Two-night B&B break (for two) with dinner on one night and two rounds at either the Menzies Cambridge or Welcombe, Stratford-on-Avon. menzieshotels.co.uk

9TH PLACE: LISBON GOLF PASSPORT

One Horizonte Golf Passport inc rounds at Ribagolfe I, Ribagolfe II, Santo Estêvão Golfe, Quinta do Peru and Aroeira 1. orizontegolf.com

Sergio Garcia

£4m

KNOCKOUT CUP WINNER

TaylorMade R15 driver

This TG drivers test gold-winning club has gone down a storm since it launched in January. It features two moveable weights on a sliding track to change ball flight.

KNOCKOUT CUP R-UP

TaylorMade AeroBurner f'way

The new AeroBurner fairway wood features a longer, deeper Speed Pocket that reduces spin and increases ball speed on shots struck

low on the face. It also has a raised crown and hosel fin to reduce aerodynamic drag.

KNOCKOUT CUP LOSING SEMI-FINALISTS

adidas Adipower Boost shoes


adidas' Boost material is 50 per cent lighter than traditional EVA and features thousands of visible TPU energy capsules fused together via a high-pressure steam molding process to provide extreme comfort.

WEEKLY WINNERS

A dozen of the new Wilson Staff DX2 Soft balls, which the brand say are the world's softest distance balls thanks to a 29-compression core.

Plus, more prizes will appear on the website once the game is launched.



A man with a slight smile, wearing a brown fedora with a light-colored band, a dark navy blue cardigan over a dark polo shirt, and dark trousers, is sitting in a field of tall, dry grass. He is looking towards the camera. He has a necklace with a small pendant and a watch on his left wrist. The background is a clear blue sky.

**'GOLF IS SYNONYMOUS
WITH ALL THE GREAT
THINGS IN LIFE...
YOU LEARN A LOT
ABOUT YOURSELF'**

'My best round ever? A four-under 68 at the K Club'

Hollywood star Dougray Scott isn't your average showbiz golfer... he was born near St Andrews, the game is a huge part of his life and he's pretty good at it

WORDS KEVIN BROWN PICTURES JAMES CHEADLE

Dougray Scott was in buoyant mood when he met TG... half-an-hour after bagging his fourth hole-in-one!

The Hollywood star – who has just appeared in the Liam Neeson thriller *Taken 3* – is unusual among actor golfers in that he can really play.

He's off six, loves the latest gear and plays as often as he can. He told us: "Golf is a big part of my life; I'm a bit of a golf geek. I collect old golf shoes; I have about 20 pairs. I don't like modern ones with rubber soles – they have to be leather, with proper studs so I feel connected to the ground. I just love golf shoes and am looking to add to my collection all the time wherever I am in the world. I'm into golf clubs as well – I must have about eight sets – and even more drivers which I love tinkering around with."

I started playing when I was five or six, as soon as I could pick up a club. I was born in a hospital next to the Duke's Course at St Andrews and it helped that my brother was also a keen golfer. I was hooked from a very early age. Courses-wise I was spoilt for choice including some great municipal courses such as Leven Sconie and the courses in St Andrews.

My father was a huge influence on me, nurturing my love of the game and teaching me from an early age about how to behave on the course. He was a salesman and during school holidays I would sometimes go on the road with him. When he'd finished work we'd nip out for a quick nine holes together wherever he was. I have fond memories of playing wonderful links at Nairn and Machrihanish, which has to be one of the amazing places to play golf in the world.

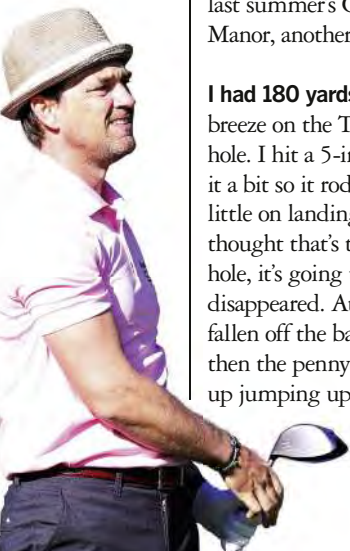
Dougray's acting CV

■ Scott began his acting career in national theatre, television, and puppet shows. He appeared in his first role on the television series *Soldier Soldier*.

■ He was personally chosen by Tom Cruise to play the villain in *Mission Impossible II* (2000), one of his biggest roles to date.

■ He was cast as Wolverine in *X-Men* (2000), but had to leave due to a schedule conflict with *Mission Impossible*. He was also a front-runner to be the new James Bond, but lost out to Daniel Craig.

■ He currently sits eighth on a ranking of Hollywood's Top 100 golfers, ahead of Samuel L Jackson and Bill Murray.



I soon learned that golf is a game about acceptance of the things that are beyond your control, and understanding your own limitations. My father created a very calm, gentle atmosphere when we were on the course together and he taught me to enjoy every round by appreciating the walk and the company.

You've got to develop and encourage and welcome young players. They should play with adults, because they'll learn how to behave – that they should play quickly! That's a bugbear of mine. Five-and-a-half hours, six hours to play a round of golf? It kills me, the amount of time people take. They feel they can procrastinate for 10 minutes over a shot. They should just get up and hit it. That's my philosophy.

When I went to college I was still playing, but only a few times a year, if that. However, about 12 years ago I started playing on a regular basis again and though playing off six now, I once had a handicap of three. I've had a few scores in the 60s, but my best-ever was shooting a 68 (-4) at the K Club. I've also had a number of level-par rounds and four holes-in-one: the latest came while practising for last summer's Celebrity Cup at Celtic Manor, another Ryder Cup host.

I had 180 yards into a very stiff breeze on the Twenty Ten course's 7th hole. I hit a 5-iron very low and drew it a bit so it rode the wind, rolled a little on landing and I immediately thought that's tracking towards the hole, it's going to be close; suddenly it disappeared. At first I thought it had fallen off the back of the green, but then the penny dropped and I ended up jumping up and down like a child!

My game is a bit up and down. I can either be very solid and shoot even par, but on another not-so-good day I can end up with 85 on my card. And then I can come back and shoot into the low 70s again. I suppose it's good to know I'm capable and can shoot a good low round, but it's all about consistency. If I play well that's fine and if it's fun too, that's a big bonus. I don't like losing.

On average I get to play once a week, depending on my work and where in the world I happen to be filming. My clubs are Richmond GC in Surrey and the new Centurion Club in St Albans, Herts, which is a really good course.

I've played hundreds of courses all over the world. I take my clubs wherever I go. Best courses? Peachtree in Atlanta was exceptional, while I love Riviera in California. UK-wise I've got to say that Scotland has got some extraordinary golf courses. Royal Dornoch is extraordinary, Castle Stuart is a cracking course and Muirfield and Nairn are beautiful.

Golf is synonymous with all the great things in life – you learn a lot about yourself. If you can control your emotions on the course it becomes a template for everything else you do in life: the challenges you face, being able to leave things behind, not dwelling on your mistakes, looking forward to the future and being able to enjoy the present. It's therapeutic and meditative, great exercise for the body and brain alike.

I want to try and get down to scratch if I can and there's no reason why I can't provided I keep on learning. That is the key and I try and learn from virtually every round I play.

PRIZE DRAW

WIN PUMA TITAN TOUR SHOES AND SHIRTS

Bag yourself the coolest shoes in golf and a stylish polo



"Outlast" technology regulates temperature to enhance comfort.



Winners can choose their favourite colour polo shirt from a host of options.

We've teamed up with Cobra Puma Golf to offer four lucky readers the chance to win a TitanTour pack, comprising a pair of the new TitanTour shoes and TitanTour polo shirt, both in the colour of your choice.

The TitanTour shoes (RRP £180) are sported by staff player Rickie Fowler and are being billed as the coolest shoes in golf down to their sleek look and thermo-regulating Outlast technology.

This innovation takes inspiration from NASA spacesuits and manages heat while controlling the production of moisture. Foot temperature is regulated through phase-

change materials that absorb, store and release heat for optimal comfort.

The TitanTour shoes also feature PowerFrame Technology – an ultra-thin TPU frame encases the midsole for lightweight strength, durability, increased flexibility and superior traction, combined with external heel support to provide greater stability during the swing. The shoes come in six colour combinations with a two-year waterproof guarantee.

The Titan Polo has been engineered for flexibility. The cutlines provide an unrestricted range of motion throughout

your swing and make movement much easier. The shirt's yarn is moisture wicking, to help keep you dry, highlighted by a contrast collar and three button placket. It comes in 10 colours, three of which are showcased above.

HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning, simply log on to www.todaysgolfer.co.uk/win, click on the Cobra Puma option and enter your email address. Entries close at midnight on March 18, 2015. Full prize draw terms and conditions can be found on the website.

ENTER NOW AT WWW.TODAYSGOLFER.CO.UK/WIN

Bunkers special



GARETH JOHNSTON

Head professional at Calcot Park, Berkshire, and part of the TG Elite coaching staff

BLAST OUT OF SAND

Two simple practice aids can ditch the two most common trap problems

PHOTOGRAPHY BOB ATKINS

By far the most common bunker issue we see when coaching amateurs is poor contact. Typically, too much sand gets trapped between the clubface and the ball. The sand absorbs the club's energy, and the ball never gets out.

We can trace this problem to issues with both the club's swing path and its angle of attack. If your attack is overly steep, or too much from inside the ball-target line, you risk hitting your bunker shots heavy. So here, I will show you a simple solution for each. Both need a small outlay on a practice aid, but I'd argue they are worthwhile investments; once your confidence in sand rises, it's amazing how it can lift the rest of your game.

Improve your attack angle: Practise with a splash board

The sand wedge is designed to work best with a fairly shallow attack; it allows the bounce on the sole to work, helping the club transfer its energy forwards into the ball, rather than downwards into the sand. However, the desire to get the club under

the ball can often lead to a steeper, more digging attack, which stalls the club. But in just a couple of sessions with a splash or compression board – widely available, and inexpensive – you can begin to feel the right approach.

1 Feel the resistance

In a sound bunker technique, the firm surface of the sand meets and resists the rounded sole of the sand wedge, stopping the club digging and firing power, through the sand, into the ball. The board basically works by mimicking and increasing the sand's effect.

2 Let the back of the sole strike the board

As a swing thought, feel you are going to strike the board with the back edge of the sole, not its leading edge. This thought will help you deliver the club on a wider, shallower attack angle, the clubhead actually swinging past your hands through the impact zone.

3 Now remove the board

Once you are making solid contact with the impact board, remove it and hit five regular bunker shots. Try to repeat the same sensations the board gave you, with the club surfing forward off the surface. With practice, you will begin to develop a much more effective strike pattern.



Start by piling sand on the impact board

Simply rest the splash board on the bunker's surface. Place a shallow pile of sand on to the middle of the board, and position the ball on top of the pile. Take your regular stance, with the ball a little inside your lead heel. Turn the face a little open before taking your grip.



Don't let the hands lead the club through

The common oversteep attack sees the hands well ahead of the clubhead approaching impact, creating plenty of forward shaft lean and leading-edge sole impact. Try this with the splash board and club and ball will both bounce, foiling any kind of decent contact.



Improve your attack path: Practise with a cane

The second common error we see at club level is taking the sand wedge away too much on the inside. When the club works in around the body too much it will tend to attack the ball from the inside. The golfer has to roll the face closed to square it,

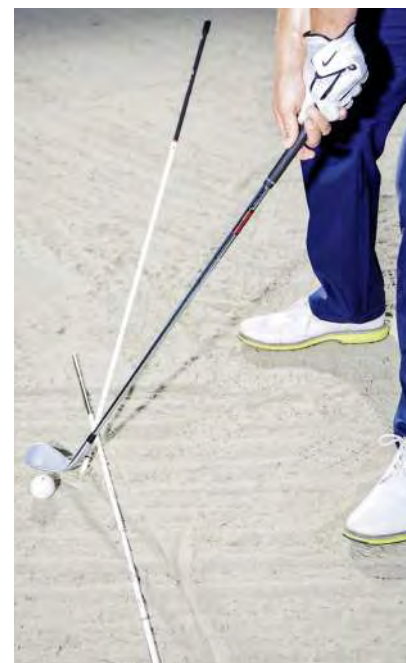
which not only delofts it but also makes its leading edge 'sharper', and more ready to dig rather than surf.

A simple alignment cane or old shaft can put your swing on to a better path. Here's how it works.

■ Shot at True Blue Golf Resort, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. For further information visit: www.myrtlebeachgolffoliday.com

3 Downswing: miss the cane

Now hit balls. Again on the downswing, the cane foils any tendency to drop the club on to the inside. It helps you train an attack path that is neutral or even slightly out-to-in. Either helps you hold the face square-to-open – meaning you can maintain face loft, and the bounce on the sole.



1 Set up a simple 'path station'

Use two canes or shafts. Lie the first on the sand, inside the ball and parallel to your ball-target line. Stick the second into the sand as shown, angling around 45 degrees up from the ground, and 45 degrees back from the ball-target line. Rest the hosel on the foot of this cane.



2 Let the cane train your backswing

As you swing back, feel your clubshaft move up along the angle of the cane. This sets a good, neutral path to your action. If your shaft wants to knock the cane back, your tendency is to take the club back too far on the inside. Make practice backswings, feeling this better path.

4 Club exits past your lead hip

As a swing thought, work on the feeling that the club moves across you – past your left or lead hip – as it exits the sand. This cements that sensation of a neutral to out-to-in path, and makes the possibility of any inside attack even more remote.



GOLF WORLD



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New Gear

The latest equipment revealed, reviewed & rated | Edited by Joel Taylor



First Look

Adams Red hybrid

New adjustable hybrid from No.1 brand allows golfers to change their ball flight

Adams Golf, makers of the No.1 hybrid on tour since 2008, has expanded its range with the new Red hybrid. The benchmark product in the Adams stable for 2015, Red offers players of all abilities an appealing, confidence-inspiring shape with proven performance. Enhancing its versatility are three adjustable sole weights, one of which is considerably heavier than the other two, to alter the shape of the ball flight.

As well as shot-shaping adjustability, the Adams Red boasts sole, crown and head features designed to deliver easy launch conditions for Tour players and amateurs alike.

"Adams Red is golf's next great

hybrid," said Brian Bazzel, Senior Director, Product Creation. "After seeing Red in testing with players of varying ability, we're confident it will resonate not only with amateurs, but also exceed the expectations of the world's best players."

Adams Golf Tour staffer Aaron Baddeley tested the Red Hybrid in early January, raving about its aesthetics and playability. "Red is the total package," said the three-time PGA Tour winner. "It's consistently long, it's versatile and I've never felt more confident and comfortable with a hybrid in my hands."

■ **Details:** Comes in lofts: 16°, 18°, 20°, 23° and 26°. Availability and RRP TBC. www.adamsgolf.com



The 3 key things to know

1 Instead of following the trend of larger heads, Adams placed the focus on versatility, with a smaller head (95cc) that can handle a wider variety of difficult shots and make Red easier to hit from different lies.

2 Adams' upside-down head design lowers the centre of gravity, while ball speeds are maintained using barbell-shaped 'Velocity Slots' on the sole and a hidden 'Ghost Slot' on the crown.

3 To maximise your shot-shaping options, three transferable weights on the sole (one 25g, two 29g) can be moved to change the flight. Placing the heaviest weight in the heel creates draw, in the toe encourages a fade.

First Look

Soft, strong and very long

The newest balls in 2015 offer even more performance than ever



The new Spin Skin coating increases contact with the grooves on wedge shots through greater deformation of the ball within the groove at impact.

Having more uniform dimple coverage reduces aerodynamic drag for a stronger long game flight.

Srixon Z-Star

The buzz word in golf balls for 2015 is 'softer' and Srixon's latest Z-Stars are no exception. Two multilayer, urethane-covered balls – as used by Graeme McDowell and Keegan Bradley – feature new technology to make them softer and produce both better launch conditions with the driver and more spin control with the wedges.

A new 'Energetic Gradient Growth' core in the Z-Star features varying levels of softness within the core. It has a softer centre and a firmer outer core compared with its predecessor. This idea is also incorporated in the Z-Star XV, which maintains the core's softness from its predecessor but adds greater firmness to the ball's thin ionomer mid-layer, to reduce spin.

Both models have a new 'Spin Skin' coating, which is 21 per cent softer than it

was on the previous Z-Star. Combine this with a seven per cent softer urethane cover and you've got a ball that's 25 per cent softer, according to Srixon.

The new 324 'Speed Dimple Pattern' is said to feature a more uniform surface coverage for lower aerodynamic resistance. This creates a more powerful trajectory.

■ **Details:** £45 per dozen. www.srixon.co.uk

Which is best for you?

■ The Z-Star is a three-piece ball built for high long-game performance, greenside spin with an extremely soft feel that performs best with driver swing speeds of 90-105mph.

■ The Z-Star XV is a four-piece ball that is more distance-orientated (100mph+ driver swing speed), with lower driver spin for a more penetrating ball flight.



The Srixon View

Srixon's Brand Manager Chris Beck talks to TG about the new tech

"The 344 dimple pattern on the previous Z-Star didn't have as much surface coverage. We use micro computers in Japan to analyse the patterns that are going to work best. Normally when you add something like Spin Skin you sacrifice distance, but ours is only a very small outer coating, that's what creates the greater spin without compromising the distance benefits."



Bridgestone e-Series

Bridgestone's popular e-Series balls – the e5, e6 and e7 – now feature a new 226 dimple pattern to improve aerodynamics and give you more distance.

The company calls them 'web' dimples, which are said to create a tighter pentagonal pattern to expand the surface coverage by 10 per cent for a consistent flight. Bridgestone

says the result is a more penetrating flight with a shallower landing angle and more roll.

■ **Details:** RRP £29.99 per dozen. www.bridgestonegolf.co.uk



Use the e5 if...
You want a higher ball flight and a softer feel around the green on short game shots.

Bridgestone e5

The e5 features a urethane cover and a large, soft compression core that gets firmer as you move out from the middle. It's designed for a higher flight with more spin on short shots thanks to its urethane cover.

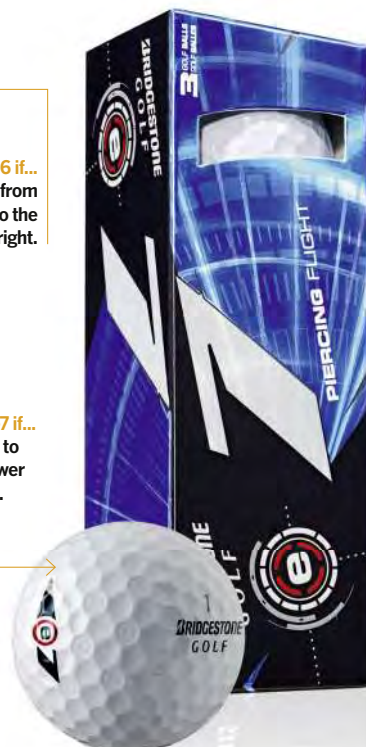


Use the e6 if...
You suffer from misses to the left and right.

Bridgestone e6

The low-spin e6 incorporates a low-spin mantle designed to mitigate off-centre hit spin typically found in slices and hooks. It includes a soft compression gradational core, mantle layer and low-spin surlyn cover.

Use the e7 if...
You want to have a lower ball flight.



Bridgestone e7

The three-piece e7, which features a graduated core, mantle layer and a surlyn cover for low spin, is aimed at players seeking maximum distance who need their long-game shots to fly lower.



The DX2 Soft is 25% softer than its predecessor and has delivered extra yardage in testing due to it generating less driver spin.

The 35 compression DX3 Spin is the world's softest multilayer ball designed to offer greenside spin with a soft feel.

Wilson Staff

Wilson Staff says it has launched the "world's softest distance ball" in the new DX2 Soft.

At just 29 compression, the DX2 Soft is the lowest compression ball on the market. Combined with the launch of a new DX3 Spin, Wilson Staff claims it now boasts the softest two and three-piece balls in the game.

"Our R&D team have been working on a lower compression solution since we first released the original DX2 Soft to the marketplace in 2007," said Doug Thiel, Global Director of Marketing for Wilson Golf.

"Research over the years has been consistent in finding that most golfers prefer a softer feeling ball."

■ **Details:** DX2 Soft RRP £19.99 per dozen. DX3 Spin RRP £24.99 a dozen. www.wilsonstaff.co.uk

Star wedges

Rory and Phil help create latest designs

Player feedback led Nike to use an 'athlete-authentic' raw finish instead of the usual chrome plating. The finish reduces glare and increases surface roughness to improve spin and control.

To give Mickelson the extra bite he was looking for, Callaway drilled four weight ports in the back of the head and then added weight to the toe, moving the CG higher in the head.

Nike Engage

Designed with help from Rory McIlroy

Rory McIlroy had kept the same Nike VR Forged wedges in his bag since he joined Nike in 2013, but in Abu Dhabi this year he debuted a new club that he's had a major hand in creating.

Designed by Nike master craftsman Mike Taylor, the Engage wedge comes in three different sole grinds – Dual Sole, Toe Sweep and Square Sole – for different types of play.

They were designed using Nike's Modern Muscle technology – used on the Vapor irons – which moves the centre of gravity more central to promote stability and consistent turf interaction. The Dual Sole (58 and 60 degrees) offers two distinctive surfaces for a variety of shots – square and open faced. The Toe Sweep (54, 56, 58 and 60 degrees) features a wide toe section and narrow heel that allows the club to be laid open at address and stay open through impact. The Square Sole (50, 52, 54, 56, 58 and 60 degrees) was created for players who prefer to play squared-face shots around the green.

■ **Details:** RRP £99.99. Available April 17. www.nike.com/golf

Callaway Mack Daddy PM-Grind

Designed with help from Phil Mickelson

Callaway and Phil Mickelson have created lots of headline-grabbing clubs in the last few years, but at last year's PGA Championship, one new club in his bag went unnoticed. It was a prototype lob wedge with a more pronounced toe that allowed Lefty to hit flop shots without having to worry about missing the ball completely in the rough.

"When Phil swings hard and opens the face, he sometimes feels like he can go right under the ball," said Callaway's wedge guru Roger Cleveland. "So he wants to feel like he has the confidence to know there's a face up there that when he does hit that shot it's going to strike the ball."

Mickelson put the wedge in play at Valhalla and kept it in the bag. Now Callaway has revealed the Mack Daddy PM-Grind. The high toe shape is the biggest difference between the standard model and this version and the toe features grooves that go all the way to the edge to increase the hitting area.

■ **Details:** Available in May in four lofts (56, 58, 60 and 64 degrees). www.callaway.com





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Three new performance golf shoes have been unveiled for 2015



1 PUMA TITANTOUR

It has the same tech astronauts use to maintain their body temperature in a space suit. Materials in the shoe, using a method called Outlast, are built to absorb and release moisture or heat around your feet. £180.



2 NIKE TW '15

Tiger's new shoes feature a 'Flyweave' upper which enables the creation of a one-piece upper that is woven to provide great strength-to-weight support where it is needed most based on the demands of your swing. £160.



3 CALLAWAY XFER

Xfer is a combination of tech focused on three fundamentals of foot control – alignment, stability and traction – and minimise energy loss in the process, transferring greater power and control into your game. £119.99.



SHARPEN

GROOVE SHARPENER



REPAIR

PITCH REPAIRER



DRAW

BALL LINE MARKER



ALIGN

PUTT ALIGNMENT TOOL



Scotty Cameron adds designs

Titleist's putter guru unveils five new shapes in the Select and GoLo lines

Master craftsman Scotty Cameron has expanded his putter line-up with a new Select model and four new GoLo shapes.

The Select Roundback is a new mid-mallet that features the same aluminium sole with crisscross sight lines popping through the

head that feature on the Fastback and Squareback models. These sight lines, set perpendicular and parallel to the face, are said to improve alignment.

In the new GoLo, the steel frame is connected to the aluminium face-sole core at five

key points with new vibration dampening technology to deliver a softer feel. They also feature four-way sole relief to prevent snagging on the takeaway.

■ **Details:** Select Roundback RRP £279, available March 3. GoLo RRP £315, available April 3.



The Roundback has a new, fully rounded shape.

The new GoLo shapes are the 3, 5, 5R and 6.

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Ecco Biom Hybrid 2

They're said to offer superb comfort and grip, but do they deliver?

Ecco's Biom Hybrid 2 is the next generation of its best-selling style showcasing the firm's "natural motion" tech.

The Biom Hybrid 2 is two-coloured to create a different look and 15 per cent lighter than the original thanks to an extra-thin midsole that helps bring players closer to the ground. This is aided by a dual-density TPU outsole.

"We've taken what many have declared the world's most comfortable golf shoe and made it even better," says Michael Waack, Head of Global Golf at Ecco. "This is a testament to our skill as shoemakers and the drive that pushes us to pioneer new innovations."

Like all Ecco golf shoes, the Biom Hybrid 2 is created using a direct-injection process that bonds the upper and outsole unit, creating a one-piece shoe construction without the use of glue or stitching for a watertight seal, flexibility and out-of-the-box comfort.

We took the shoes to Ingon Manor GC in Stratford, where four TG readers put them through their paces.

Give us your first impressions

MP: I can't believe how comfortable they are and I like the design. There are some lovely colour options on offer.

JCo: They're really nice. The colour is great and it's good that they come with white laces so you can change your look. I know they do shoe maintenance on their website too which is great.

JCa: They're incredibly comfortable. I thought I might have to wear them in a bit but there was no need as they feel great straight out of the box.

CM: Very comfortable and I really like the colour. I see them as a summer shoe because they're spikeless and I prefer to wear darker colours in the winter as they're easier to keep clean.

Are they stable during the swing?

MP: Absolutely. The conditions were tricky but even on an icy

range they offered great grip.

JCo: Great grip and comfort. Your toes can spread as the fit is not too snug but you feel sturdy as the insole seems to mould around your foot.

JCa: There's been no slipping and they offer good support, particularly for the arch of your foot. I often have to put an insole into my golf shoes for support but there's no need with these.

CM: Very much so. They were really supportive and offered a surprising amount of grip considering the icy conditions.

Anything you didn't like?

MP: They've held up really well today but it will be interesting to see if the colour lasts if I keep using them in winter conditions.

JCo: Not particularly. I haven't had spikeless shoes before because of how quickly they wear but Ecco say these studs

are highly durable and they've been right so far.

JCa: Certainly not in terms of performance but while the technology is great, £170 still seems a lot.

CM: I've got no complaints and think the price is fine if you are going to use them all year round.

Your final verdict?

MP: I was really surprised. I was expecting them to be a summer shoe that would struggle in winter conditions but they offered really great grip. They're probably the most comfortable shoe I've worn.

JCo: I was surprised how much grip I got despite the icy conditions and I like the fact that you can buy wipes, leathers and gels to maintain them. They felt more like an athlete's shoe than a heavier, traditional shoe.

JCa: Really impressed. They're very comfortable and provide good grip.

CM: They've performed very well in what was a stern test considering the bleak conditions. After today I'd happily use them in the winter and not just as a summer shoe.

ECCO BIOM HYBRID 2

RRP £170. Available in a range of colour combinations, also in yak leather option.

www.eccogolf.co.uk



READER OFFER

FREE GRIP FOR EVERY READER!

We've teamed up with Golf Pride and Foremost to help you Grip with Confidence in 2015

If you're playing with old, worn grips, there's a good chance they're hurting your scores.

Old grips – anything over a year – degrade to the point your hands will slip and you'll end up holding the club tighter – a smooth swing killer. So we're giving you the chance to experience what a new grip feels like absolutely free.

We have teamed up with Golf Pride and Foremost to give every reader the chance to Grip with Confidence in 2015 by getting a free Golf Pride grip fitted by a PGA professional on one of your irons (subject to terms and conditions; see below).

All you need to do is visit your nearest participating Foremost pro shop and you can take advantage of this superb offer.

Your qualified Foremost professional can also check your current grips to see if they are too worn or the wrong size for you.

■ Details of the participating Foremost professionals can be found at www.foremostgolf.com/free-grip-offer

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

■ Offer restricted to one Golf Pride grip per reader and subject to availability at participating Foremost stores. Please contact your chosen store prior to visit.

■ Offer can only be redeemed at participating Foremost professionals.

■ The offer is for one Golf Pride Tour Velvet grip to be fitted free of charge to any iron (3 to 9-iron).

■ The offer only runs from February 17, 2015 to March 17, 2015.



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PING GLIDE WEDGES

Tech: Custom engineered from the hands down to ensure the grip, shaft and head perform as a system for greater consistency and versatility. A new Dylawedge grip is three-quarters-of-an-inch longer, has softer tapering and grip-down indicators.

Looks: I prefer the lighter finish. It's more consistent through the bag with my S55 irons and this will apply to many other golfers, too. They also appear slightly more compact than the Gorge wedges, making them seem more versatile.

Feel/Sound: It's difficult to tell, but you could make a case for them feeling marginally softer than the Gorge wedges.



The longer Dylawedge grip also feels thicker, especially in the right hand, which creates a more stable feel.

Control: There's noticeable grab on the second bounce with these. With the Gorge, the spin levels were good, but you had to really nip the ball cleanly to see significant levels of check. With Glide wedges, you see the ball pop up more frequently on landing.

Performance: While the difference in performance between Gorge and Glide is minimal, any increase in greenside control is worthy of note. Combine that with a more appealing finish and the Glide wedges tick all the boxes. With the three sole widths, you can get the versatility in your higher-lofted wedges while keeping the extra bounce on your lower-lofted ones to help you out on full shots.

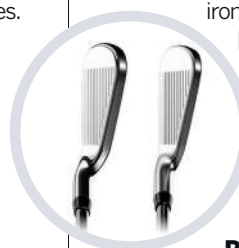
CALLAWAY XR & XR PRO IRONS

Tech: Despite having the same shaft length and loft of the outgoing X2 Hot irons, the XR irons are said to be 12 yards longer. How? Via Callaway's 360 Cup Face technology, which allows the entire face to flex at impact.

Looks: Stand-out design features at address include a double white bottom groove for alignment, thick topline and shiny finish.

The standard XR has a fair amount of offset, which reduces considerably in the Pro model.

Feel/Sound: The standard XR feels incredibly hot from the middle, creating a towering flight. The XR Pro feels solid, but some will find it a little firm and clicky for an iron they want to play.



Forgiveness: Excels in this area. On both models there's a lot of face area that produces good ball speed with what feels like minimal twisting on heel and toe strikes.

Performance: These clubs are designed to slide in between the Apex and Big Bertha irons and they certainly appear to do this on distance. They're longer than most game-improver irons on the market and offer bundles of launch assistance for inconsistent strikers. The XR irons are about a degree stronger than the XR Pro model through the set, but match that of other brands' game improver models. The stand out features of the XR irons is how easy they are to hit, the confidence they inspire at address and the distance they will achieve for a variety of swing speeds. Even fast swingers will enjoy the ball flight and help on offer.



JOEL TADMAN
TG's gear editor plays off four and tests clubs at Thorpe Wood Golf Club, Peterborough.

PRICE £105 **SPEC** CFS Steel shaft.

VERDICT Improvements made in looks, feel and greenside control. New grip also helps consistency on knock down and finesse shots around the green.

PRICE £549 **SPEC** Project X LZ steel shaft.

VERDICT Very long, easy to hit while mishits lose minimal ball speed. Not the softest-feeling irons, but they do feel incredibly powerful from the sweetspot.



ODYSSEY O-WORKS 2-BALL FANG

Tech: Odyssey's new O-Works putters feature an RX insert, which enhances feel and roll. Spearheading the line-up is the new 2-Ball Fang, which has a 42 per cent higher MOI than the previous 2-ball thanks to the use of a 12g piece of thermo plastic on top, placing more weight lower and toward the perimeter.

Looks: Larger than your standard 2-Ball, the face looks shorter because of the width that protrudes behind it. But it's incredibly easy to align and return a square face to impact. The new silver/black combination maintains the contrast but in a fresh, stylish way.

Feel/Sound: Arguably one of the most stable, controlled putters on the market. It almost swings on a neutral path by itself, all you have to do is set it moving. As a SuperStroke user, the inclusion of this grip as a stock option enhances feel and face control further.

Forgiveness: Not something people often think about with a putter, but it was noticeable how well heel and toe strikes rolled out from long range while maintaining decent feel.

Performance: The O-Works line takes putter technology to a new level. I've always liked the soft feel Metal-X Milled faces provide and when you combine that with extra stability and Versa alignment, you've got a formula for taking fewer putts. You get a little bit of pop off the face, but it remains controllable and doesn't jump up, it rolls earlier than you expect, especially when you don't catch it.

PRICE £189 **SPEC** SuperStroke grip incurs a £20 upcharge. **VERDICT** Maintains soft feel while improving stability and roll on mishits. If you're a face-balanced putter user, you must try this.

CALLAWAY BB ALPHA 815 FAIRWAY

Tech: Features a Hyper Speed Face Cup and two adjustable 3g and 30g sole weights to alter launch, spin and shot shape. The weight closest to the face is also positioned toward the toe, creating low spin and fade bias.

Looks: Short from front-to-back and relatively deep faced with little alignment assistance, this is clearly aimed at better players. That said, it boasts a premium finish that oozes class.

Feel/Sound: Feels firm and powerful from the middle with a dull sound, little to dislike.

Forgiveness: Not the club's strongest point, but there's still enough corrective spin there to find the fairway on average strikes. You have the option of fighting your over-draw by placing the heavier weight in the front toe section, reducing the amount of spin in the process.

Performance: Even considering my 14° model, this tended to be quite a low-launching club with a fair amount of draw bias built into the head, making it a superb second option off the tee when the driver is misbehaving. If you need to use it off the fairway, placing the heavier weight at the back will help to raise launch and MOI, but it might be worth opting for the 16° head to help create even more stopping power on landing without giving up too much yardage. Ultimately, this is a very long fairway wood offering a penetrating trajectory with extra versatility via the intuitive sole weight system.

PRICE £249 **SPEC** Lofts 14°, 16° and 18° with a Fujikura Speeder 665 shaft. **VERDICT** Ample distance combined with useful adjustability. Compact size enforces suitability to better players.

TITLEIST PRO V1

Tech: A new thermoset cover formulation makes the Pro V1 and ProV1x feel softer than previous generations.

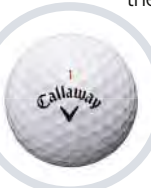
Performance: Having carried out both launch monitor testing and played the ball for a few rounds, the softer feel and enhanced control around the green was noticeable. Off the tee, performance appears very similar to the previous version, but that extra greenside spin is going to please a lot of golfers. The durability remains impressive – you can play the same ball for an entire round with minimal scuff marks.



CALLAWAY CHROME SOFT

Tech: Said to offer low spin off the tee and extra control greenside via a 65 compression, a new SoftFast core and DuraSpin cover, the softest and most durable urethane cover Callaway has ever made.

Performance: You can certainly notice how it feels softer than most Tour balls on the market. With the driver, that translates into a jumpy feel off the face but seemingly without losing distance. Around the green, levels of check are superb, allowing you to be more aggressive and carrying the ball further than you may do normally.



TITLEIST PRO V1 £51 a dozen
VERDICT Excellent long-game performance with more greenside control.
CALLAWAY CHROME SOFT £29.99
VERDICT Impressive all-round package given the price. Well worth a try.

Bridgestone's 2015 bombers

Premium drivers offer Tour-proven distance, feel and accuracy

After four years away, Bridgestone Golf is back with new hardware set to be played by Matt Kuchar and Brandt Snedeker.

The new J715 and J815 drivers feature a 'Fast Action Speed Technology' (FAST) crown, which is thin at the face and thicker towards the back of the head. Bridgestone says this lets the crown to flex at impact, creating a higher launch and more speed.

A power-milled face, which reduces the ball slippage on the face of traditional drivers at impact, reducing spin by 200-300rpm compared to the previous J40 driver. Kuchar has picked up seven yards total distance.

Unique to the shallower-faced J815 model is a Power Rib sole that generates a 10 per cent lower spin rate. It also offers a higher launch and a CG positioned more toward the heel for more draw bias.

■ Details: Available in 9.5° and 10.5° from March at specialist Bridgestone centres. RRP £349.99. www.bridgestonegolf.co.uk



On our shopping list this month...

FootJoy's improved Tour glove, the Mechanic's grips and a Garmin watch



FJ SCIFLEX TOUR

What it is: FJ's new Tour-approved glove.

Why you might want it:

Worn by 64 PGA Tour pros, the SciFlex Tour delivers tour-proven feel and grip, as well as enhanced comfort through greater levels of breathability and flexibility for unbeatable cool-dry performance.

Details: RRP £16. www.footjoy.co.uk



LAMKIN WRAP-TECH

What it is: Slip-resistant wrap grips.

Why you might want it:

Used by Miguel Angel Jimenez, the new Wrap-Tech features Lamkin's 'Double Helix' surface texture, delivering comfort, control and feel. The dual pattern makes it extremely tacky in all weathers.

Details: £7.99, black/white, black/red or black/blue.



GARMIN APPROACH S5

What it is: Lightweight watch with high-res display.

Why you might want it:

Pre-loaded with more than 39,000 courses and free lifetime updates, it features CourseView mapping and GreenView, allowing you to drag the pin to the day's location.

Details: RRP £279.99 in black (coloured straps sold separately).



KBS WEDGE SHAFTS

What it is: Two new steel wedge shafts.

Why you might want it:

The 610 shaft delivers a lower, penetrating flight with controlled spin, while the Hi-Rev 2.0 features an active tip that increases effective loft, delivering higher launch and more backspin.

Details: RRP £30. 610 between 110g and 125g. Hi-Rev 115g and 135g.



MOTOCADDY DRY-SERIES BAG

What it is: Waterproof trolley bag.

Why you might want it:

This lightweight bag is made from a coated fabric, ensuring complete rain protection for clubs and accessories. Seven pockets include dedicated storage for drinks and valuables.

Details: RRP £179.99 in three colours.

Spoilt for choice

Cleveland Golf's new RTX 2.0 wedge comes in two designs – a blade and a cavity back – in 46-64° lofts and three bounce options.

READER FITTING

Get the perfect wedge set

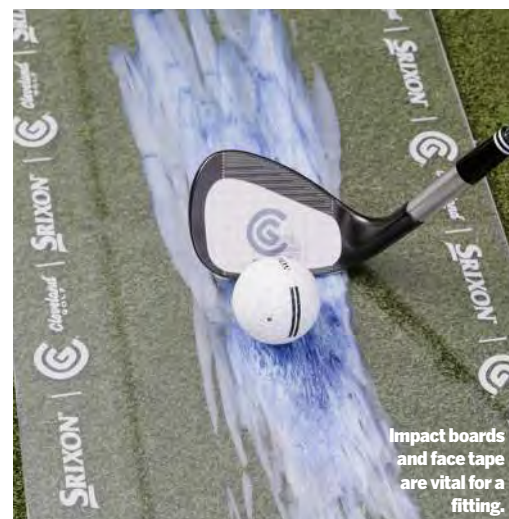
Are your scoring clubs doing all they can for you? Our readers' wedge fitting experience at Cleveland would suggest not...

WORDS JOE DOWNES PICTURES HOWARD BOYLAN

“On average, 65 per cent of a golfer's shots occur within 125 yards, which means your short game needs to be dialled in,” says Cleveland UK Fitting Technician Martin Conner. However, wedges are an area of equipment that, for many club players, remains neglected. Your wedges are your scoring clubs and yet are often consigned to a place well down the list of priorities when it comes to being fitted. ➔



Readers James, Ben and Mark with one of Cleveland's new wedge-fitting carts.



Impact boards and face tape are vital for a fitting.



Cleveland Golf's dot bounce system is easy to understand.

At the Srixon/Cleveland Centre of Excellence at Studley Wood Golf Club in Oxford, three TG readers discuss their own set-ups. "I haven't been fitted for my current wedges," reveals six-handicapper Mark Reddaway. "I just went with them because they're the same shafts as my irons."

It's similar for 11-handicapper Ben Chappell: "I was a bit lazy with my wedges," he says. "I didn't really understand the options so went with all-terrain wedges straight off the shelf and thought six degrees

Dot fitting

■ One dot:

Low bounce Best for players with a shallow angle of attack.

■ Two dots:

Standard bounce For those who have an average angle of attack.

■ Three dots:

Full sole Best for players with steep attack angles.

between them would be OK."

James Whelan completes the picture: "I got a couple of wedges with my irons," says the 16-handicapper. "So I just put another couple in to match as best I could."

Ben, Mark and James are about to benefit from a three-step fitting process developed by wedge specialists Cleveland. Conner explains how it works.

"The first is distance gapping," he explains. "We look at the numbers their current wedges are producing

and then decide on heads, lofts and shafts. Then we'll go out onto the short game area for a bounce fitting. "I'll get the guys to hit full, half shots and chips off the turf and bunker shots while asking the guys about shots they typically hit and where they play their golf."

"Finally we go through the custom options, looking at lie angle, length and grips for the new wedges."

Find out how all three got on – and what difference a wedge fitting made to their bags – on the right.

How to find the best wedges for your game



Martin Conner
Cleveland Golf's
custom fitter

■ Get the gapping right

Generally, distance gapping should be no less than three degrees and no greater than six degrees between each wedge. That should translate to between eight and 14 yards' distance when hitting

a full shot. You need to feel comfortable at any distance within 125 yards.

■ **Understand bounce** High bounce tames a steep attack and reduces divots, while lower bounce is designed to get under the ball. Bounce should suit your game and the typical condition of your course. You can go for different bounces on

different wedge lofts, ie full bounce for use on full and bunker shots and low bounce for use around the green and lob shots. Cleveland's dot system (explained above) makes this easy to understand.

■ Get fitted

With 300 of our fitting carts

around the country there is no excuse for not having the perfect wedge set-up for your game. Myself and the rest of the team take these carts around the country and a mobile fitting is free so I urge people to take advantage of the level of detail we offer.

■ **More details at** www.clevelandgolf588.co.uk



'I never understood wedges until today'



Ben Chappell Hcp: 11

Current wedges: PW (47°), 52°, 58°
Fitted for: 50° (blade, standard bounce), 54° (blade, full bounce), 58° (blade, full bounce)

■ **Ben says:** My current pitching wedge produces about 122 yards, which left me with two clubs from 120 yards and in. That's too much and if I try to nail my 58 it just goes straight up in the air with no control. I've never understood all the wedge specs that we've been through today. It's been an eye opener.

■ **Martin says:** Two clubs from 120 yards was asking too much of Ben. His 52 went 105 yards and his 58 went 83 yards, so the gaps were just too big. The extra wedge solved that so his gaps are now 122, 110, 99 and 83. He's got quite high bounce at the moment and his divot pattern was perfect, but in the short game, even with the high bounce in the 58, he was struggling to get out of sand. We tried a 60 but he was popping that straight up, so we're going to bend that 58 to 59 to help.



Mark Reddaway Hcp: 6

Current wedges: PW (44°), 52°, 56°, 60°
Fitted for: 50° (blade, standard bounce), 54° (blade, low bounce), 58° (blade, low bounce)

■ **Mark says:** My current wedges have the same shafts as my irons and are all the same length so judging distance is tough. I had a gap of eight degrees between my PW and my 52 which meant I struggled to hit a distance of about 110 yards comfortably. I tend to thin shots due to the heavy shafts making me go at the ball too hard.

■ **Martin says:** Mark was custom fit for his irons which have been bent strong, so the issue was that his PW was going 119 yards and his 52 was 16 yards behind that. We've gone to a 50 degree that produced 108 yards to bridge that gap. The 54 was eight yards behind that and the 58 another 14 yards back, so the gapping is spot on now. His divot pattern was very shallow on the turf and in the bunker, so we've gone for less bounce.



James Whelan Hcp: 16

Current wedges: PW (45°), 50°, 56°, 60°
Fitted for: 50° (blade, standard bounce), 54° (blade, standard bounce), 58° (blade, low bounce)

■ **James says:** I struggle with my distance control and tend to be short or long with full shots. Lots of times I think I've hit a good one and they come up short because the ball balloons. Straight away the RTX's helped me hit the distance I wanted and the blades were slightly heavier than mine, which I liked.

■ **Martin says:** His gapping was pretty good. The main issue was that they were from different manufacturers which meant the shafts were different, impacting his spin rates. He wasn't getting enough spin with his 56, for example, which meant there was too large a gap in terms of yardage to his 50. I've filled that by reducing the loft and matching up his shafts. Hitting full shots on the turf he took a large divot so we've given him a couple more degrees of bounce.



'I've been very impressed with the new Rotex technology'

Says Graeme McDowell

Cleveland promises more spin and control from its new 588 Rotex 2.0 wedges. Like last year's best-selling 588 RTX, the new clubs – in blade and cavity-back versions – feature Tour Zip Grooves, which are eight per cent deeper than before with sharper edges.

Cleveland claims this creates about 15 per cent more spin from the rough than their predecessor.

"There are some great new bounce and grind options that will allow versatility for pros and amateurs," says Graeme McDowell (below). "Really, it's just a great wedge."

The new wedge also has a new Rotex surface-roughening treatment on the face to grip the ball better, while lasers etch a pattern between each of the grooves.

Both models come in 46-64° lofts, and made from carbon steel for a soft feel. Each comes in tour satin or black satin, in three bounce options.



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Courses

The inside line on where to play, home and abroad | Edited by Kevin Brown



IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN

St Andrews hosts its 30th Open this year... get there before the crowds

WORDS KEVIN BROWN

The excitement and anticipation as the East Coast express train leaves Edinburgh Waverley station and rumbles over the spectacular Forth Bridge is massive: a golf break in the Kingdom of Fife – the epicentre of the golfing world – is literally around the corner and clearly on the horizon.

It is the golf trip of a lifetime and there is simply no other place like it.

St Andrews, the Home of Golf, is an extraordinary place, steeped in history and heritage. It will take your breath away every bit as much as the stiff breeze that frequently blows in off the North Sea and over the West


Sands which famously provided the opening scenes for legendary Oscar-winning movie *Chariots of Fire*.

You're in real golfing heaven and no matter how many times you've teed it up on the Auld Grey Toon's revered Old Course – with the 1st tee sitting right in front of the striking R&A clubhouse – the hairs on the back of your neck are sure to be standing on end as you eye up the widest fairway in golf.

Fife has it all – which is hardly surprising considering they've had over 500 years of practice. The Old Course may be the Mecca but overall the Kingdom boasts around 50

quality courses and there's barely a weak link among them. The offerings range from world-class, world-famous links – both ancient and modern – to stunning inland layouts of the heathland and parkland variety.

All golfing tastes and budgets are catered for, so if you can't enjoy a break here, golf is clearly not your game.

The majority of visiting golfers from the UK and the rest of the world naturally head for the many on and off-course attractions of St Andrews and arguably nobody knows the golfing capital of the world better than David Scott, the new Director of Operations at the 



A look from behind the 12th green on the Old Course.

Courses Fife

The standout par-3 17th on the Castle Course.



five-star Old Course Hotel, Golf Resort & Spa which towers over the hallowed links turf.

Scott is St Andrews born and bred and in fact grew up on Hope Street, just a 9-iron from the Old Course's 1st tee. In between playing as much golf locally as he could, he studied at Madras College and worked in the school holidays in the Tom Morris Golf Shop and the Pancake Place in South Street.

He developed into a highly-accomplished player and in 1990 represented Great Britain and Europe in the biennial PGA Cup match while he also competed in two Scottish Opens and the PGA Championship at Wentworth. The former head pro at Balbirnie Park GC and Director of Golf at Kingsbarns Golf Links reflects: "I have been extremely lucky in my career. For anyone with a love of golf, there is nowhere better to be than St Andrews."

Many firmly agree with that sentiment and you can certainly count Fife-born Hollywood actor Dougray Scott among them. The six-handicapper chips in: "The people of Fife understand what golf is all about

The courses

Old Course, St Andrews

Green fees: £80-£170.
Contact: 01334 466718.

Kingsbarns

Green fees: £194-£226. **Contact:** 01334 460860.

Fairmont St Andrews (Torrance & Kittocks)

Green fees: £60-£150.
2-FORE!-1: All week. **Contact:** 01334 837000.

Castle Course, St Andrews

Green fees: £60-£120. **Contact:** 01334 466718.

Crail

Green fees: £35 til Feb 28, £45 til Mar 31. **Contact:** 01333 450686.



The Duke's has improved markedly recently.

and what it means to Scottish hearts and minds. Unlike in many other places, golf in Fife is an egalitarian sport and one that everyone is encouraged to play.

"Although I grew up 20 miles away from St Andrews I got to play the hallowed links, including the not-so-well-known Jubilee and Eden courses – however I also eventually got to play the Old Course, which is the one everyone wants to play."

A trip to Fife is fraught with potential problems, especially if you're on a relatively short break. With so many class acts around you, you really are spoilt for choice and the temptation is to cram in as many courses as you

possibly can. As a result, many gems will be left undiscovered and left to another Fife visit – whether it be the following year, a few years later or even a decade or so down the line. But you will be back...

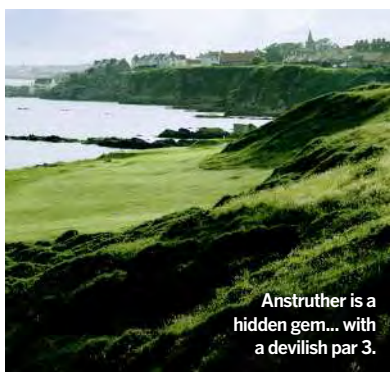
Naturally, to experience the mighty links of the likes of the Old Course, Kingsbarns and the fairly new Castle Course, on the outskirts of St Andrews, doesn't come cheap and you'll need pretty deep pockets if you want such venues to appear on your itinerary.

As a result, many visitors tend to 'mix and match' and play a combination of top links alongside some of the area's lesser – and mega expensive – lights. And, if you look around – and in truth you don't have to search too hard, there are plenty of deals and value about.

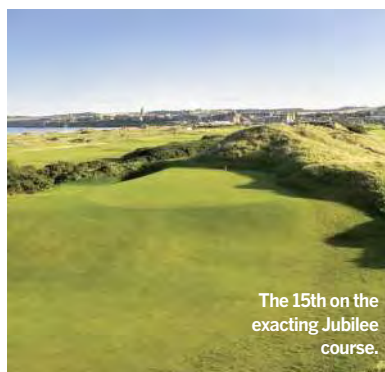
Undoubtedly one of the best is through Links with History (linkswithhistory.com), who offer a unique golf pass offering quality links golf at four historic venues (Crail's Balcomie and Craighead layouts, Ladybank, Lundin and Scotsraig) at super value. These are no ordinary courses: three of them have staged Open Final Qualifying while Crail



Kingsbarns is one of the world's best modern courses.



Anstruther is a hidden gem... with a devilish par 3.



The 15th on the exacting Jubilee course.

(1786) is the seventh oldest golf club in the world and Scotsraig the 13th. It's well worth knowing that until the end of March you can experience Links with History for a bargain rate of £22.50 per course (a minimum of two courses must be booked to take advantage of this offer).

You can also hit one of the seven golf trails (visitfifegolf.com) which include Classic Links, Open Championship Qualifying and a collection of courses ideal for on-course family fun. Or, for a change of scenery, you can take full advantage of the excellent 'First in Fife Golfpass' (firstinfifegolf.com) involving a dozen of the region's best parkland layouts.

But Fife is all about great links courses, right? Wrong. Ladybank is a phenomenally good inland course with the pencil-slim fairways lined by pine trees, so expect to do a lot of chipping out sideways if you are not accurate off the tee. Golf in this part of Scotland doesn't have to be on links courses and this beautiful heathland emphasises why. Honorary members include Jack Nicklaus and Seve Ballesteros.

Another must play, even though

'THE NEW COULD ECLIPSE ITS OLDER BROTHER THE OLD IF IT CARRIED THE SAME HISTORY'

you're likely to fork out three figures and then some for the privilege, is the awesome Duke's Course – the only inland course at St Andrews. It's a beauty as well as a beast – a tough nut to crack whichever tees you play from. It may be wise to avoid the back tips (at 7,500 yards, it's one of Scotland's longest layouts), but you'll be knocked out by the beauty of the place, the immaculate course conditioning and the sensational views of St Andrews and beyond.

TG can also highly recommend the Old Course's nearest neighbours the New and Jubilee courses. Having opened in 1895, the New's name is a little misleading. It has its own shared fairways and double greens and is a links which could eclipse its older brother if it carried the same history. Indeed many locals reckon the New is better than the Old. It's that good and

The courses

Duke's Course
Green fees: £50 until Mar 31.
Contact: 01334 474371.

New Course
Green fees: £37-£75.
Contact: 01334 466718.

Jubilee Course
Green fees: £37-£75.
Contact: 01334 466718.

Leven Links
Green fees: £55-£60.
Contact: 01333 428859.

Elie
Green fees: Til Mar 31 - £40 (£45 weekends). Both include soup & sandwiches or coffee & hot roll.
Contact: 01333 330301.

Do it yourself

Getting there

Let the train take the strain. East Coast operates direct services to Leuchars, a short taxi or bus journey from St Andrews. Standard Advance returns, booked online at eastcoast.co.uk, from London to Leuchars start from £64. Times and fares also on 03457 225225, or from staffed stations and rail booking agents.

Where to stay

St Andrews has accommodation ranging from B&Bs and guest houses to luxury hotels such as the iconic Old Course Hotel. Another great place to stay, but just outside the town, is stylish Fairmont St Andrews, which offers quality accommodation, facilities and eating options. Meanwhile Kingask is a family-run, holiday letting business with a wide range of properties situated along the Fife coast. From cosy rural retreats to majestic town houses there is something to suit all tastes and budgets. Many of the St Andrews properties are within easy walking distance of the Old Course. Visit propertystandrews.co.uk

Do it yourself

Deal 1 Fairmont St Andrews' Winter offer: Two nights' B&B and 54 holes of golf (Old Course, Jubilee & New courses), costs from £249pp until Mar 31. Lowest rate available during Jan with the rate increasing through February and March. Guests also may arrange for an additional round on either of the resort's courses from £40pp. Call 01334 837000.

Deal 2 Kingask St Andrews are offering 10 per cent off selected properties up to the end of March. Plus you receive a two-for-one offer on both the Torrance and Kittingtons at Fairmont St Andrews. Call 01334 472011 or e-mail info@propertystandrews.co.uk

Deal 3 Ardgowan Hotel, St Andrews: Three nights' B&B (double or twin) and three rounds including on the Old Course with the other two on the New, Jubilee, Castle, Eden or Straththyrum. From £252.50pp (min. two golfers). Call 01334 472970.

Courses Fife

there really isn't anything to dislike about this top-class, gorse-lined links. The same goes for the Jubilee, which arguably provides the toughest test among the St Andrews Links Trust's courses – especially with it being the closest to the sea and therefore the most affected by the wind.

There are hidden gems – the charming but virtually unheard of quirky links of Elie is a shining example – and surprise packets galore including the under-rated and much overlooked Eden course within the town of St Andrews. The handiwork of legendary architect Harry Colt, it celebrated its centenary last year and unlike the majority of St Andrews tracks, is usually pretty quiet. Plus, you'll get change from £50.

It's also worth noting that around 10 Fife courses belong to 2-FORE!-1 and therefore offer half-price golf, the most notable being the two outstanding clifftop layouts (Torrance and Kittocks) at the swish Fairmont St Andrews resort. Another 2-FORE!-1 participant is Kirkcaldy, a splendid mature and challenging parkland designed by golfing Godfather Old Tom Morris in 1904. It provides dramatic Forth views.

If you're looking for a quick game then nine-holers Anstruther and Cupar will duly oblige: the latter dates back to 1892 and is reputed to be the home

The courses

Scotsraig

Green fees:

£65-£80.

Contact:

01382

552515.

Ladybank

Green fees:

Midweek,

£24-£60;

Weekend,

£29-£70.

Contact:

01337

830814.

St Michaels

Green fees:

£10-£25.

Contact:

01334

838666.

Anstruther

Green fees:

£18

for 9 holes, £28

for 18.

Contact:

01333

310956.

of the oldest nine-hole club in the world while Anstruther boasts the toughest par 3 you're ever likely to play... the 200-yard+ 5th. Known as 'The Rockies' and played from an elevated tee to a slender, well-guarded green next to the beach, it is a memorable experience.

But if you really want to savour golfing history check out the nine-hole Kingarock hickory course, where you can experience how golf used to be played with a nip of whisky on the 1st tee providing the perfect start.

However, a Fife break wouldn't be complete without visiting the atmospheric golf town of St Andrews, which can be seen in all its glory by climbing the spiral staircase in St Rule's Tower – part of the eerie 12th Century St Andrews cathedral.

With St Andrews set to stage the Open Championship again in July, it's probably best to do all this before (or after) the seriously big crowds flock into town in mid-summer...

**'ANSTRUTHER
BOASTS THE
TOUGHEST PAR
3 YOU'RE EVER
LIKELY TO PLAY'**

Off course highlights

■ In the centre of Fife you'll find historic Falkland Palace, which boasts the oldest royal tennis court in Britain – it was built for James V in 1539, and today is the home of a club with 70-plus members.

■ Troywood, near St Andrews, is Scotland's secret bunker and one-time underground nuclear war command centre.

■ Deep Sea World at North Queensferry, Scotland's national aquarium which is home to one of the world's longest underwater glass tunnels.

■ Knockhill Racing Circuit, Scotland's national motorsport centre near Dunfermline.

■ Take a memorable summer time boat trip to the Isle of May – nine miles off the coast – and you'll discover 40,000 puffins.

■ You can see the region from the Kingdom of Fife Cycle ways, a network of over 300 miles of dedicated cycle routes.

Clifftop fun
on Fairmont's
Kittocks.



Ladybank is one
of Scotland's top
inland courses.



This picture
doesn't need a
caption...



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Courses My top 10



GRAEME STORM'S FAVOURITE COURSES

The Hartlepool Tour winner reveals his top 10 UK layouts...

Graeme Storm's list is populated generally by stellar, historic layouts. But one name stands out – modern Rockliffe Hall just outside Darlington in his native Durham.

Storm represents the luxury resort, including the modern Marc Westenborg layout, on Tour and although he concedes he's a little biased, insists it makes his top 10 with good reason. "It may lack the history and pedigree of many of the other courses, but it's a top track in its own right. I'd recommend it to anyone. It's a serious test of golf too, especially if you take it on off the back tips – it's nearly 7,900 yards. I've no doubt Rockliffe Hall can host a Ryder Cup in the future."

■ Royal County Down, Co Down

This has got to be at the top of my list as it's such a fantastic course with great scenery and great views. There are quite a few blind holes but it still plays fantastic. I happened to win The Amateur here! **Green fees:** £50-£190.

■ Woodhall Spa (Hotchkin), Lincs

Inland courses don't come much better than this – a great course where I particularly love the way it's bunkered. The sand traps are very deep and penal. Thankfully my bunker play is usually red hot. **Green fees:** £75.

■ Turnberry (Ailsa), Ayrshire

Arguably the most attractive links on the mainland. A great Open venue and the 9th by lighthouse starts a memorable stretch. **Green fees:** £230.



Rockliffe is already one of north-east England's finest courses.

His golf CV

■ Learnt game at Hartlepool, where he still holds the course record (62).

■ Won The Amateur in 1999 and represented GB&I in the Walker Cup before turning pro in 2000 (+3).

■ Recorded a first when his mother caddied for him at 2000 US Masters.

■ Two Challenge Tour wins and one on European Tour, '07 French Open.

■ In 2007 he led the US PGA after shooting an opening 65 but eventually finished tied 62nd.

■ Rockliffe Hall, Durham

This English Senior Open venue is a fabulous layout, the longest course in Britain. Boasts a great variety of holes including a par-3 island green. Always in tip-top condition and is a joy to play whatever time of the year. **Green fees:** From £35.

■ Muirfield, East Lothian

I love the feel of it here. Part of a stretch of East Lothian links known as Scotland's Golf Coast, but the home of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers is the best. **Green fees:** £210.

■ Royal Lytham & St Annes, Lancs

Another top links. Although not right on the coast it's a fabulous layout among the houses. The 1st to 3rd along the railway line are superb. **Green fees:** Until Mar 31 – £130 Mon-Fri & Sun, £195 Sat.

■ Ganton, Yorkshire

It's not long but it's still an awesome course – it's fraught with danger and you've got to be so straight... or else. If the wind is blowing it's really tough. I love going back there. **Green fees:** £80-£85.

■ Sunningdale, Surrey

Both the Old and New are awesome – although if I have a preference it would be the New. But they're both class heathlands and if I had the chance to play anywhere every day this would be it simply because it has two fabulous courses. **Green fees:** £205.

■ Moortown, Yorkshire

I've played in the Brabazon Trophy around here and I've good memories of the place. Plotted in a fabulous heathland setting, Moortown is an old-fashioned, tree-lined layout. Again you've got to hit it straight or you'll be punished. **Green fees:** £45-£85.

■ St Andrews (Old Course), Fife

How can I leave out the Home of Golf? For me, the Old Course has it all, including a world-famous finishing stretch of holes heading back towards the town itself. It's the course in the world where the hairs on my neck stand on end. **Green fees:** £80-£170.



Moortown punishes the wayward.

BELEK'S BEST...ALL YEAR ROUND

Stay and play at the sun-kissed resort where Tiger and Rory went head to head



Luxury awaits at Antalya Golf Club and at Sirene Belek Hotel (pictured)

Right next door to the manicured fairways of the PGA Sultan and the Pasha at Antalya GC is the Sirene Belek Hotel. It boasts four restaurants, six bars, a cafe, a nightclub, an amazing spa, kid's club and an array of super leisure facilities.



THE eyes of the golfing world were on Belek in 2012, when Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy jetted in to Turkey to take part in their only matchplay showdown to date.

The biggest names in the game chose **Antalya Golf Club** as their venue, as they and several other world superstars – such as Lee Westwood and eventual champion Justin Rose – competed in the Turkish Airlines World Golf Final.

They selected wisely, for **Antalya Golf Club's** PGA Sultan course has been a fixture in Golf World magazine's Top 100 Courses in Continental Europe for many years. It is complemented by its sister, the slightly-shorter Pasha, a charming course that is a Top 200-listed venue.

Antalya Golf Club wasn't the first course in Belek, but it was the first to promote the area as a 'must visit' for British golfers – so it has played a key part in the rapid popularity of this region in southern Turkey. In addition to the world-class courses, there are two – stunning, five-star hotels right next door – the family-friendly Sirene Belek and the opulent Kempinski.

Both are magnificent places to base yourself for a memorable week's golf holiday.

Of course both the courses and the hotels are blessed with year-round sunshine that makes it easy to understand why the area is known as 'The Belek Golf Riviera'. Even in January, you will only need a sweater in the evening...

So what are you waiting for? Book now to tread the very same fairways where Tiger and Rory did battle!

Five reasons to book now

- **Antalya Golf Club** boasts two of the finest courses in Europe
- Both courses are in immaculate condition all year round
- Antalya Golf Club offer preferential tee

times and rates to Sirene Belek and Kempinski's guests

- Amazing weather every month of the year
- Lots to do off the course – from sandy beaches to stunning spas and lots of water sports

Contact Antalya Golf Club: Visit www.agc.com.tr, call 0090 242 725 5970 or email Reservation@agc.com.tr

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Courses Stay & Play



Rudding Park's outstanding par-3 5th over a lake.

Rudding Park, North Yorkshire

A firm favourite with the rich, the famous... and golfers

With the spa town of Harrogate down the road, Rudding Park is the ideal base for a visit to this corner of the White Rose county. Indeed, it's been chosen by the rich and famous, with presidents Clinton, Bush and Gorbachev among its guests along with Prince Albert of Monaco and boxing legend George Foreman.

All those distinguished guests will have enjoyed the multi-award winning, independently-owned hotel, which combines contemporary design with traditional elegance and super service.

It's particularly popular with couples getting hitched – a church is literally on the doorstep – and golfers, with the two, three and five-day Residential golf schools being suitable for all ages and abilities. They cover all aspects of the game and include video analysis as well as on-course tuition. Available year-round, they take a maximum of four golfers.

On-course

Rudding Park has a pair of courses designed by leading architect Martin Hawtree. The main attraction is the mature 18-hole Hawtree parkland course which is plotted on gently

The facts

■ **Top deal:** Play up to four rounds of golf (two on the Hawtree & two on the Repton) or relax with a 40-minute taster treatment at The Spa with this dinner, B&B offer available on selected dates. Spa clients unwind in the steam room and before their taster treatment. Costs from £115 per person. To book call 01423 871350.

■ **Green fees:** £50.

■ **2-FOR-1:** All week (after 1pm).

■ **Contact:** Call 01423 872100 or for more information visit www.ruddingpark.co.uk

rolling terrain and boasts a terrific combination of holes with several featuring water features.

After an opening pair of gentle par 4s, things spice up with a testing par 3 over a pond, a demanding uphill hole back towards the hotel and the super par-4 dog-leg 4th which is played from an elevated tee to a lakeside green.

Pick of the short holes is the 163-yard 14th, aptly named Rhododendron Glade owing to the flourish of colour that surrounds the green in summer.

You can warm-up for the Hawtree on the excellent covered floodlit driving range or by tackling the splendid six-hole par-3 Repton Short Course, including the Sawgrass lookalike island green on the penultimate hole.

Off-course

The Grade 1 Regency house hotel and surrounding parkland has undergone constant development over the past 20 years. The 90-bedroom four-star hotel boasts a relatively new spa, gym, the 2AA Rosette Clocktower restaurant and even its own cinema. Many rooms in the Follifoot Wing have private balconies while four Spa rooms feature a spa bath, sauna or steam room.



▲ **Top to bottom:** The 5th on the Repton, which is a picturesque short course; the range is part of an outstanding academy; the four-star hotel offers all the class you would expect within a Grade 1 building.



SUPER SAVINGS

Seven 2-FORE!-1 venues where you can save the most cash this season...



Fairmont St Andrews is set on a spectacular clifftop site.

1 FAIRMONT ST ANDREWS

Just down the coast from the Home of Golf you'll find this golfing haven, with the luxury hotel overlooking two exceptional and contrasting courses (Torrance & Kittocks) as well as superb facilities. The clifftop Torrance is the star attraction, and has staged Open qualifying as well as the Scottish Senior Championship.

■ **Green fees:** £150. **2-FORE!-1:** All week. **Tel:** 01334 837023.

2 FOREST OF ARDEN, WARWICKS

Top all-round Marriott venue near Coventry with bags of pedigree. The superstar Arden course, the handiwork of Donald Steel, has staged the British Masters three times and is a serious examination of parkland golf: not only is it fairly long, you have to carefully plot your way round the assorted trees, water hazards and well-placed bunkers.

■ **Green fees:** Up to £120. **2-FORE!-1:** Mon-Fri. **Tel:** 01676 526113.

3 SLALEY HALL, NORTHUMBERLAND

Widely recognised as the north east's leading golfing venue, the unforgettable – and extremely challenging – Hunting course is undoubtedly the main attraction here. It is a former European Tour venue and still hosts the Seniors circuit. It boasts a fantastic mix of holes with the par-4 9th – titled 'Sleeping Giant' – being the pick of a classy collection.

■ **Green fees:** £65-£110. **2-FORE!-1:** All week. **Tel:** 01434 673154.

4 ST MELLION, CORNWALL

Crown Golf's flagship is home of the formidable Nicklaus course – the Golden Bear's first UK course project – as well as an outstanding second layout (the Kernow) and an on-site hotel with quality facilities. The mighty Nicklaus, with its own Amen Corner, quite rightly grabs the limelight; it's the ultimate test of inland golf.

■ **Green fees:** £75-£95. **2-FORE!-1:** 2015 season: All week (can book up to 10 days in advance). **Tel:** 01579 351351.

5 THE ROXBURGHE HOTEL & GC, SCOTTISH BORDERS

The late course architect Dave Thomas created some of the best modern courses in the UK and this rolling parkland layout is right up there among the best. It is the pride and joy of owner, the golf-loving Duke of Roxburghe. It sits next to the river Teviot and the par-5 14th 'Viaduct' hole is the signature of signature holes.

■ **Green fees:** £80. **2-FORE!-1:** All week. **Tel:** 01573 450333.

6 THE MERE, CHESHIRE

From the moment you drive through the striking archway entrance you know you are somewhere special. The Mere is one of Cheshire's finest stay-and-play venues, the luxury hotel overlooking a rolling James Braid/George Duncan-designed parkland which finishes with a par 5 by the lake which also happens to be the range (you hit floating balls into it!).

■ **Green fees:** £75. **2-FORE!-1:** All week, excluding Weds. **Tel:** 01565 830155.

7 THE PLAYERS CLUB, BRISTOL

This West Country course is a beauty as well as a beast and wouldn't be out of place in Florida. The American-style Codrington layout is long and intimidating with water hazards and bunkers galore. On the plus side, it's easy walking and is always in good condition.

■ **Green fees:** Mon-Fri £48 a round, £72 a day; Sat-Sun £52 a round. **2-FORE!-1:** Midweek in summer (on day ticket). **Tel:** 01454 311818.

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Southern comforts

With 101 courses, Myrtle Beach is the capital city of American golf

WORDS DUNCAN LENNARD PICTURES BOB ATKINS

Stand on the tee of Glen Dornoch's par-3 17th and you learn exactly what golf in Myrtle Beach is all about. Hitting you like a four-club wind is a panorama of forest, sky and expansive, buzzing marshland. Pleasure boats drift past on the hazy Intracoastal Waterway while above, red-tailed hawks mew. Somewhere in the middle of all this, 170 yards distant, is an immaculate green. Deep and narrow, and protected by a series of moon-crater bunkers, its blue-flagged pin waits more

in hope than expectation. Target golf against a beautiful, natural backdrop is the name of the game in Myrtle Beach. It's true that despite the region's name, that backdrop is rarely the Atlantic; indeed, of the 101 courses the area boasts, the par-3 9th of the Dunes Club is one of the very few views the golfer gets of the epic, south-east coastal sweep known as the Grand Strand. Yet the ubiquitous marshland and the thousands of towering live oak trees, often draped in frozen waterfalls of Spanish

moss, give this low-country landscape an appeal that rivals cliff and beach.

The Myrtle Beach area itself stretches some 30 miles along the northern portion of South Carolina's seaboard. Route 17 runs north-south through the region, conveniently linking many of the courses, and finding your way around – not always easy in the States – is mercifully simple. The compact nature of the town not only gives Myrtle Beach the comfortably intimate feel of a golfing town – it ➤



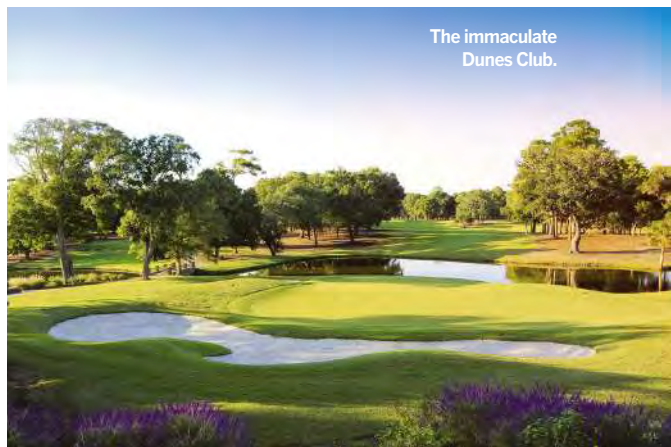
The epic True Blue course – sister to Caledonia.



A view from the 6th tee at Caledonia.



The immaculate Dunes Club.



Glen Dornoch – not much like its Scottish namesake.



also gives you terrific options. You can, for example, play Glen Dornoch, at the northern tip, in the morning, and Caledonia, at the southern end in the afternoon.

Glen Dornoch itself – we can instantly park any similarities with Dornoch, or indeed any signs of a Glen – epitomises the Myrtle experience. Both nines weave through thick forest, fairways and greens subtly defended by marshy ditches and lakes, before emerging gloriously at the wide open spaces bordering the Intracoastal Waterway – an inland water route that in fact renders Myrtle Beach an island. The coast may be two miles away; it hardly matters.

Meanwhile, Caledonia is considered one of Myrtle Beach's finest tracks. As you head up its oak-framed drive to a pristine and elegant colonial clubhouse, it's not hard to imagine you are arriving at a version of Augusta National; immaculate maintenance and landscaping does little to break the spell.

The course itself at times approaches fantasy golf, a stunning sequence of fleeting, sinuous fairways leading to perfectly sited greens protected by pond, branch and sand. It demands strategy and accuracy but the Mike Strantz test is never less than fair and exhilarating... especially at the climax. For as you reach the 16th tee, you start to hear cheers ahead. The clubhouse deck overlooks the water-guarded 18th green and you will have a demanding gallery for your final approach. Position your tee shot to the right

'THE DUNES CLUB WAS BUILT BY ROBERT TRENT JONES IN 1949 AND PUT MYRTLE BEACH ON THE MAP'

and you can leave as little as 140 yards in... giving you the chance to create your own moment of glory.

Across the road, Caledonia's sister course, True Blue is the perfect accompaniment. Yawning expanses of fairway give you the chance to open your shoulders, while the many sandy waste areas aren't especially penal and amplify the visual appeal. As with Caledonia, one picturebook hole follows another, right from the opener – an epic, sweeping 600-yard par 5 with an unmissable fairway and an unhittable green.

Almost midway between True Blue and Glen Dornoch is the course that triggered the Myrtle Beach golf boom. "The Dunes Club was built by Robert Trent Jones in 1949," says Chris King, communications director for Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday. "It put the place on the map. It's hosted six senior PGAs, a US Women's Open, the finals of Q school, and the PGA Professional National Championships."

The course itself doesn't exactly run along the Ocean front, but the clubhouse is there. The course itself has much more natural

movement and elevation than others in the area, and offers Ocean glimpses. But the course is considered a classic of architecture, and should be on anyone's Myrtle itinerary.

Myrtle Beach's big rival is, of course, Florida. With prestigious resorts like Bay Hill and Doral, and direct flights from the UK (Myrtle Beach needs a switch at Charlotte or Atlanta), it would seem to have the edge. King sees things very differently.

"To start, no destination in America can compete with the quality and quantity of our golf offerings," he argues. "We have 13 of the top 100 public courses in America. The likes of Caledonia, True Blue, Heritage, TPC Myrtle Beach, Barefoot's four courses... Tidewater is for many the prettiest course of them all. These are all exceptional venues.

"Then there is value. Bay Hill may offer more prestige than a place like Caledonia, but it's not regarded as a better golf course. Try putting together a package for four nights and rounds in April at both venues; you'll find Caledonia substantially cheaper.

"But above all," he adds, "Myrtle Beach is a golf town. Everyone here is invested and interested in golf. Myrtle Beach feels like a golfing community. It's an easier place to get what you want out of a golf holiday.

"But underpinning it all is the quality of the courses. When you leave other destinations, you can wind up talking about the sights or the entertainments; when you leave Myrtle Beach, you're talking about the golf."

The inside line on Myrtle Beach

Where to stay, what to do off the course and some of the best deals on offer

OFF-COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

■ Broadway at the Beach

A mix of nightclubs, pubs, shopping, dining, fireworks and attractions that comes to life after dark – and all based around a coastal lagoon.

■ Huntingdon Beach State Park

A gorgeous expanse of stunning beaches and beautiful marshland walks, including a route that takes you to spectacular Atalaya Castle. Bird-watching and surf fishing are superb.

■ Water sports

When not on the fairways in Myrtle Beach, you should be on the water. Salt water kayaking and deep-sea fishing are two of the most popular water-based activities. The beach itself is fantastic, with sea temperatures of 72°F in October. But leave your thong behind. Myrtle considers buttock-revealing as indecent exposure.

■ Brookgreen Gardens

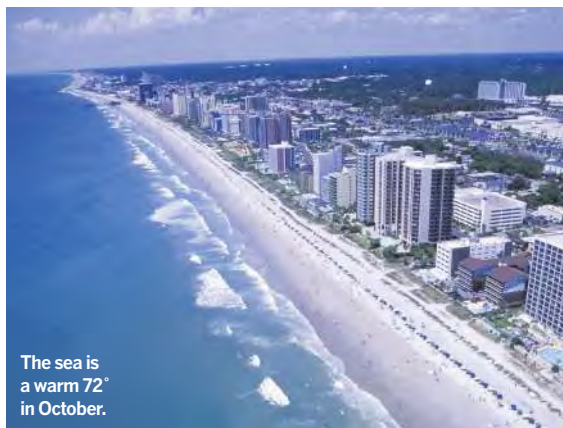
Part zoo, part art, part history lesson, this popular centre sets out the area's fauna, flora and culture. It offers historic boat rides, and features America's largest outdoor sculpture garden. \$14 gets you in for a week.

WHERE TO STAY

Myrtle Beach is the home of the golf package, with 60 golf break companies in the area and a wide source of accommodation, from coastal retreats to stay and plays. Your first port of call is www.myrtlebeachgolfholiday.com but also consider:

■ North Beach Plantation

Impressive, towering beachfront resort with a massive range of amenities,



The sea is a warm 72° in October.

Selected star courses

Caledonia

6,526 yards, par 70
www.fishclub.com

True Blue Golf Plantation

7,126 yards, par 72
www.fishclub.com

Glen Dornoch Waterway golf links

6,890 yards, par 72
www.glensgolfgroup.com/myrtle-beach-golf-courses/glen-dornoch/

The Dunes Club

6,615 yards, par 72
www.thedunesclub.net

Tidewater

7,044 yards, par 72
Tidewatergolf.com

including a Caribbean-themed pool.
www.northbeachrentals.com

■ Marina Inn

A luxurious resort, centrally located on the Grande Dunes resort near the beach. Seven holes on this dramatic course flank the Intracoastal Waterway.
www.marinainnatgrandedunes.com

■ Inlet Sports Lodge

A more intimate, upmarket resort in Murrell's Inlet, to the south of Myrtle Beach, offering authentic low country dining at its Bliss restaurant.
www.inletsportslodge.com

■ Mar Vista

Family-friendly seafront resort with kids' pool, fitness suite and a range of water features including a lazy river.
www.marvistagrande.com

WHERE TO EAT

To the south end of Myrtle Beach, Bistro 217 on Pauley's Island offers superior American fayre including braised ribs and local flounder. More central are New York Prime, which has developed a reputation for the area's best steak, and Aspen Grille. Right on the coast, the charming Sea Captain's House is the place for superb seafood.

WHEN TO GO

Myrtle Beach's peak seasons are April and October, when humidity is low and the region averages 76°C. There are deals to be had in high summer, if you don't mind the 91°C average and sweltering humidity. September perhaps offers the best trade-off, with the summer humidity broken and

temperatures averaging 85°C. It is the Atlantic hurricane season, but stats show you'd be unlucky to catch one. The winter average is 54°C.

SAMPLE DEALS

■ Caledonia Golf Vacations –

Captain's Choice Package features golf at True Blue and Caledonia. Includes four nights at True Blue condos and five rounds. Golfers will be based in Pawleys Island, an idyllic community that oozes Southern Charm. \$549 (£363). fishclub.com

■ Barefoot Golf Vacations –

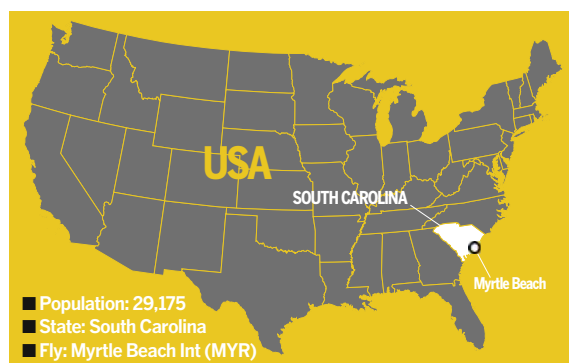
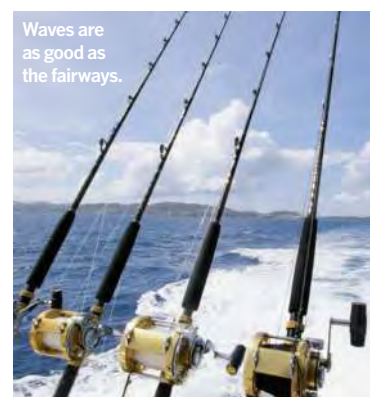
Buy three and get the fourth round free on Barefoot Resort Courses. Home to layouts designed by Pete Dye, Greg Norman, Tom Fazio and Davis Love III, Barefoot has a quartet of outstanding layouts and offers a resort experience as players can stay and play onsite. barefootgolfvacations.com/packages

■ Prime Times Rewards Package

Book four or more spring rounds on the new Prime Times Rewards Package, and each member of your group receives a \$100 rewards card, redeemable at any Prime Times Signature Course clubhouse. Each golfer also receives a \$15 Carrabba's Italian Grill dining certificate and \$20 PGA Tour Superstore gift card. mbn.com

■ Top tip

Start and end your holiday in style: to save time and hassle at the airport check out the world's top comparison brand, Looking4Parking.com (visit looking4parking.com) who offer a great meet-and-greet service.



- Population: 29,175
- State: South Carolina
- Fly: Myrtle Beach Int (MYR)

PRIZE DRAW

WIN A SEVEN-NIGHT SPANISH HOLIDAY

Four-star luxury and golf for two in heart of the Costa del Sol

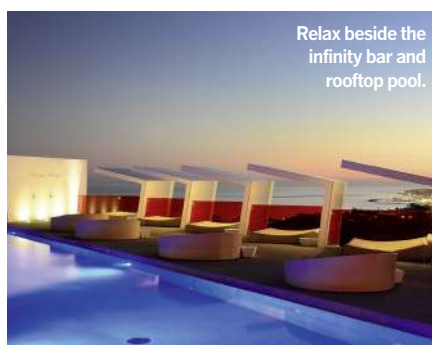


El Chaparral's picturesque 13th hole.

A state-of-the-art design hotel in the heart of the Costa del Sol has opened its doors to golfers for the first time this winter. And the good news is that one lucky Today's Golfer reader can experience a memorable seven-night golf break for two people at the Reserva del Higuérón, worth £1,000.

The four-star superior category Reserva del Higuérón is nestled within the Higuérón estate, located 20 minutes from Malaga airport and the home of choice for the city's glitterati and footballing stars. The hotel's elevated position affords fantastic coastal views, none more so than from the stylish infinity bar and rooftop pool.

The 177-bedroom adult-only hotel is set to attract golfers looking for a stylish base with outstanding on-site facilities, away from the seemingly never-ending concrete jungle of towering buildings overlooking the coast, but within easy touching distance of the many off-course attractions, including lively nightlife



Relax beside the infinity bar and rooftop pool.

of Fuengirola, Benalmadena and Malaga.

It features rooms with balconies, a spa with sauna, Turkish baths and Vichy showers, a dynamic pool and hydrotherapy area, and a free shuttle service to the beach, just one kilometre away. There is also a sports club with 11 padel tennis courts, two tennis courts and a semi-Olympic-sized heated pool.

There are no fewer than 15 golf courses within a 25-minute transfer, and the lucky

winner and companion will get to play three rounds on two of them (El Chaparral and Cabopino) during the week. The array of courses also includes the likes of Torrequebrada and Mijas, and tee times can be reserved for Reserva del Higuérón guests in advance and at preferred rates.

Flights are not included but you can fly direct to Malaga from as little as £25 per person each way from all over the UK.

■ For more details visit www.reservadelhigueron.com

HOW TO ENTER

Log on to www.todaysgolfer.co.uk/win, click on the Costa del Sol option and enter your e-mail address. Entries close at midnight on Wednesday, March 18. Full terms and conditions can be found on the TG website.



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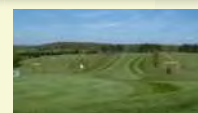
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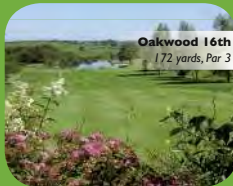
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Tear-out Tips



3 Keep it shallow

Here we have the set-up for a 7-iron shot into the wind. Move the ball back of centre, with the hands forward so that you are reducing the loft on the club. With 60% of your weight on the left, think about keeping the swing short and shallow. You don't want to get too steep even though the set-up encourages this. This would probably be a normal 9-iron distance so remember to take more club when you are punching into the wind.



4 Try 'putting' your chips

For a very 'safe' chipping action, try approaching it like a putt. That means standing much closer to the ball so that the shaft is steeper and the heel of the club is off the ground (pictured). You can use a putter grip and lean into the shot with 65% of your weight forward. Use a central ball position.

5 The basic chip

Chip with the shaft vertical. A common mistake is to see amateurs lean the club forwards, but this nullifies the bounce on the sole and encourages the leading edge to chunk into the turf. Set up square, but splay out the left foot so that you turn through the shot. Place the ball just forward of centre.



6 Hands back for a lob

For more advanced players, setting up for a high shot with your hands back and the club open can be a good option. A slight shaft lean backwards is fine, but keep the ball and weight forwards and don't scoop, the bounce on the club will help it to skim under the ball.



Today's Golfer Tear-out Tips

Quick drills you can take to the practice area

This month...

ADDRESS

Six drills to help you get the ideal set-up whatever the club

If you don't start from a correct position then it will prove difficult to hit consistently good shots? I see a lot of club golfers address every ball in the same way which can be a recipe for disaster. Here are six set-up positions for six different shots. Some of the changes are subtle, but others have some key differences.

With
DARREN PARRIS

Head professional at
North Foreland Golf
Club, Kent



TURN
BACK FOR
MORE
TIPS

1 Prepare for power

Ball position with the driver should be in line with the left heel and the shaft needs to be vertical so that your hands are above the clubhead and not the ball. Make sure the sole of the club is flat on the ground, your feet wide enough for a stable foundation, your weight 55% on the right side.



2 Half and half for hybrid

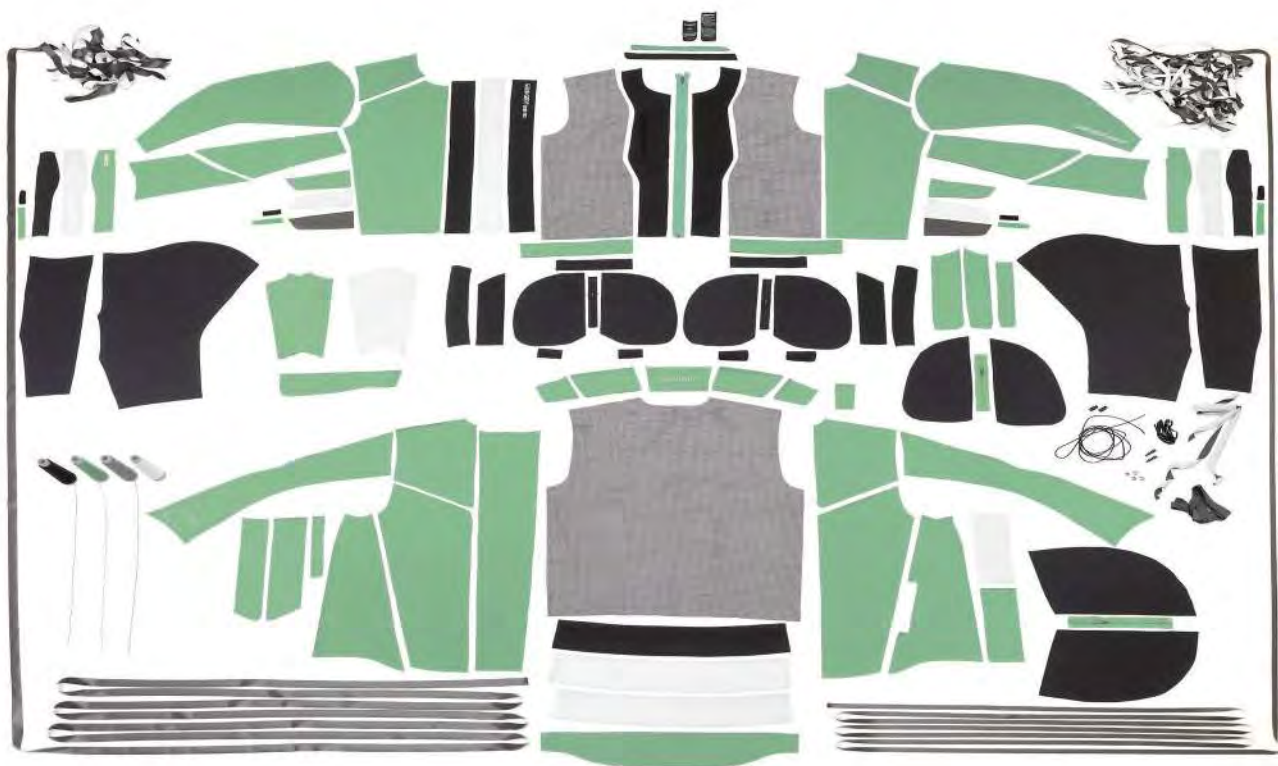
Your weight should be evenly balanced at 50-50 when you play a hybrid. Move the ball a quarter of the way back in the stance, so it is halfway between the middle and the left heel. Have your feet a shoulder-width apart and the top of the grip needs to be level with the back of the ball, placing your hands just ahead of the clubhead.



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